A poetics of uncertainty: a chorographic survey of the life of John Trevisa and the site of Glasney College, Cornwall, mediated through locative arts practice

By

Valerie Ann Diggle

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A poetics of uncertainty: a chorographic survey of the life of John Trevisa and the site of Glasney College, Penryn, Cornwall, mediated through locative arts practice

Connections between the medieval Cornishman and translator John Trevisa (1342-1402) and Glasney College in Cornwall are explored in this thesis to create a deep map about the figure and the site, articulated in a series of micro-narratives or *anecdotae*. The research combines book-based strategies and performative encounters with people and places, to build a rich, chorographic survey described in images, sound files, objects and texts.
A key research problem – how to express the forensic fingerprint of that which is invisible in the historic record – is described as a *poetics of uncertainty*, a speculative response to information that teeters on the brink of what can be reliably known. This poetics combines multi-modal writing to communicate events in the life of the research, auto-ethnographically, from the point of view of an artist working in the academy. As such, it makes a pedagogical contribution to reflective writing about creative practice.

John Trevisa, in the context of contemporary Cornish culture, is a contested figure because his linguistic innovations, in the course of translating key texts from Latin into the English vernacular, make no obvious contribution to Kernowek (Cornish), which is currently undergoing revival from a position of extinction. However, Glasney College, where Trevisa is likely to have been educated, is generally regarded as the centre for the production of the *Ordinalia*, a cycle of medieval mystery plays written uniquely in Kernowek. This thesis considers the vocabulary that Trevisa innovated, such as *concept, fiction, virtual*, as crucial to research writing but calls for a new vocabulary to articulate the feminised, labile research processes that characterise this research. It also uses the site and the figure as templates to articulate wider, contemporary systems under stress socially, culturally and politically.

Key words : chora; uncertainty; poetics; deep map; reflective writing; autoethnography; Trevisa; Glasney; Ordinalia; creative practice.

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INTRODUCTION

A poetics of uncertainty: a chorographic survey of the life of John Trevisa and the site of Glasney College, Cornwall, mediated through locative arts practice

It was not originally my intention to produce a poetics at the start of this research. My concern was to pay attention to the process of making work in response to site. I was curious about the impulse to work site specifically, about my own impulses to make this kind of work and about what seemed to be burgeoning place-based performative practices in the 21st century, inside and outside the academy.

In 2010, when I first became interested in a site formerly occupied by a medieval seat of learning called Glasney College, in the centre of Penryn, Cornwall, it had not received much attention from researchers who were also contemporary practitioners in the arts. But it had been thought about by various interest groups who, for example, wished to celebrate the history of the site by establishing a landscaped garden on Glasney field or to expose the archaeological remains of the medieval building as a permanent visual feature and visitor attraction. For various reasons none of these projects had materialised.

I was not interested in a literal recovery of shreds of information about Glasney. Instead, I wanted to use the creative space that emerged on the edge of what could be reliably known, about the place and the people associated with it, that were not present in what is commonly understood to be official historic records.

green charism

Scene: int. daytime - a library
Trevisa (whisper)
Before me, there was no word for abstract
thought in this our language
No word to describe a general concept – such as
general or concept
It was I who first gave you the word vir-tu-al
It was my word-gift to you - my charism
Unwrap my gift and out will tumble
Fiction
Immaterial
The essence of an angel is intellectual substance
– you heard that from me first
Intellectual
Before me no intellectual had made an
appearance in English
Potential

all those words that are now your favourites,
I, John of Trevisa, translator,
erstwhile scholar of Glasney, shaped your
thoughts by giving you the words
to think them in your mother tongue
did I say Mother Tongue ?
Hold it. Bite it. Tie it.
I will return to that topic later.....
all those suffixes of abstraction
-ty
-anc
-ion
Thank me Thank me for the atom thank me
for zero

Early on, I was beguiled by the discovery that many fragments of the original building did remain but were dispersed around the medieval heart of the town, incorporated into its vernacular architecture, in houses and boundary walls. Then, the discovery of a 14th- century Cornishman and translator, John Trevisa (1342-1402), who was probably educated at Glasney as a child, provided me with an historically verifiable figure associated with the site, albeit tenuously. It also provided me with the opportunity to work imaginatively, to develop narratives about Trevisa's relationship, not only to Glasney College, but also to a set of medieval miracle plays called the *Ordinalia*, composed uniquely in the Cornish language (Kernowek) and possibly devised at Glasney during Trevisa's time there.

Trevisa is historically significant because of his linguistic innovation that occurred when he translated, from Latin into English, two epic works; the Polychronicon (c1387), a universal history of everything and *On the Particularity of Things* (c1398), a medieval encyclopedia. These innovations included invented words, such as *virtual, fiction, accidentally, concept* and *intellectual*, to express philosophical ideas for which there was no pre-existing English vocabulary. These vernaculars, dispersed through scribal technologies, are synchronous as metaphor, in terms of my own making, with the dispersed remnants of the College building through the phenomenological, architecturally vernacular, townscape.

Together with other subsequent discoveries, they facilitated the making of work which became a language-based search for a poetics to express vocabularies of localization and sitedness, as a kind of dialect or spoken language. This became relevant, not only to Glasney and Trevisa, but to me and my own emerging identity as a female artist-scholar.

The contested heart of an imagined triadic encounter between Trevisa, Glasney and Kernowek became increasingly controversial, in the context of the debate around Cornish cultural identity and devolved powers politically for Cornwall, during the lifetime of this research. The reasons for this are complex but are due in part to Trevisa's activity at Oxford, where he is likely to have been a member of Wyclif's team who produced, by translating from Latin, the first English version of the Bible.
This was an incendiary project in its day. Two hundred years later, post-Reformation, when Cranmer tried to unify worship across England, by introducing a prayer book in English and set of liturgies in English of his own invention, the Crown permitted the people of Wales to continue to worship using a Book of Common Prayer and Bible in the Welsh language. But no such permission was granted to the Cornish people. The Cornish, who had no access to a Bible or Prayer Book in Kernowek, requested to continue to celebrate the Mass in Latin and, when this request was denied them, the violence of the Prayer Book Rebellion erupted in 1549 and spread rapidly across Devon and Cornwall. Glasney College, once an intellectual centre with a European wide influence and reputation, appears to have reached a peak of exhaustion by the time of this rebellion.

In the beginning

a stone at the altar
was a monument to collective amnesia,
to silence
the field is a *chora*
like a quarry, *shaped by what it gives shape to*
a receptacle waiting to be filled
with ideas, dreams, arguments, artworks

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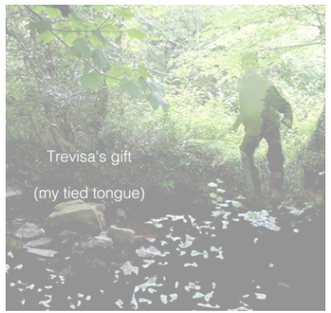
Thurston C. Peter's account of the history of the College (1903), based on the Glasney Cartulary, describes how, by the middle of the 16th century, the fabric of the building, always unstable due to the bogginess of the ground, at the head of a creek on which it was built, had finally fallen into major disrepair. Clerics were frequently chastised, following impromptu visits from senior members of the diocese, for neglecting their duties. But the rebellion coincides with the dissolution of Glasney and the subsequent physical dismantling of the building post-Reformation. In narratives around the relationship of the College and its linguistic support for Kernowek, its ignominious demise is tangled with narratives of oppression and the brutality of the Crown's ruthless reaction to the uprising.

The survival of the Welsh language until the present day is sometimes attributed to the ability to worship in Welsh, whereas post-1549, the Cornish language went into terminal decline. One of the last native speakers, before the revival of Kernowek at the beginning of the 20th century, was Dolly Pentreath, who died in 1777. So a sub-text to the controversy underscoring an imaginative alliance between Trevisa, Glasney College and Kernowek is that if Trevisa had somehow had the ability to predict the impact of the Reformation on the Cornish language, two hundred years down the line, and had focused his attention on producing a Cornish rather than than supporting an English version of the Bible, maybe there would be as large a percentage of native Cornish speakers across Cornwall today as there are contemporary speakers of Welsh in Wales. For this reason, amongst some groups, the association of Trevisa with Glasney and the *Ordinalia* is sorrowful not celebratory.

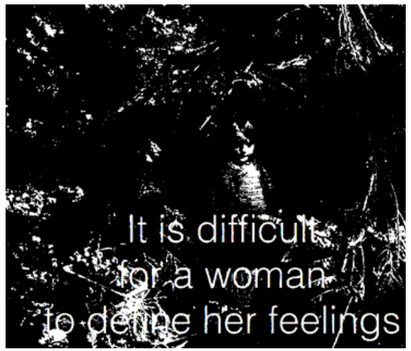
For some nationalists I spoke to about Trevisa, for example, he is significant because he enriched the language of colonial oppression and anyone who defends his cultural contribution is an anglophile apologist. For others, he illustrates the precarious position of the English vernacular at this time, on the verge of what they consider to be extinction, without scholars like Trevisa to revive it. That the English language should dominate contemporary discourse in the western world is therefore, by implication, more due to medieval resuscitation techniques than to any intrinsic worth. For a third, less politicised, group Trevisa is an entirely unknown entity with no obvious relevance to their own lives. As a writer and artist, returning to live and work in Cornwall, after an absence of many years, nationalist attitudes caught me off guard. Feelings appeared to run deep inside collapsed historical time frames that were then reconstructed/re-membered, to support political agenda in the present. At first, I was not sure how to make work in response to this or if it was even appropriate to do so.

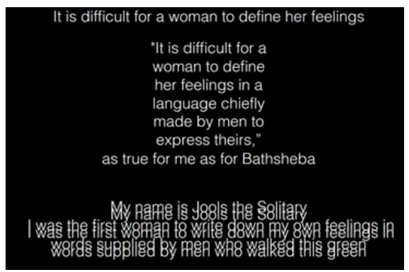
I was inititally excited to find Trevisa as a candidate for a resonant historical figure that I thought might be rehabilitated in a fresh cultural context, and was grateful for his word-gift that seemed to provide me with an indispensable research lexicon. But to construct what gradually emerged as a *poetics of uncertainty*, using the discourses of academia, was challenging, There seemed to be an irresolvable binary, rather than a permissive interstitial zone, between a requirement to make the work and then to articulate a rationale for its making. In the landscape of the thesis there was an uncanny mismatch between these events that I did not know how to address.

In the absence of absolutes
is *magical thinking*



Trevisa's word-gift was my initial letter, a starting point. phrases to get by in a foreign place -
vir-tu-al con-cept In-tell-lec-tu-al ac-ci-den-tal-ly
But soon I stuttered, echolaic
Tent pegs from a travelling fair disturbed the buried dead. fleeting impressions include - small runic entries of a bird's foot in the mud's soft journal – meeting the imprint of my own my boot on the return. Other wraiths, or wood-smoke like snagged fleece, settle among windless branches - the dawn drips with birdsong. Look at the charred circle where once there was fire.





So another layer of uncertainty is attached to the vocabulary that was available to me at the beginning of the research which, far from facilitating the enquiry, sometimes tied my tongue.

The particular geographies of Cornwall are intrinsic to this research. Across the peninsula the physical landscape has a porous quality that manifests as a literal and metaphoric conduit. Occasionally old mine shafts open up in back gardens, swallow buildings or sections of road. But there is also a natural porosity connecting people and locality, in ritual festivals at Helston, Padstow and Penzance for example, that is regionally distinctive and an expression of resonant relationships between place and language that H. Paul Manning (2003) characterises as *word made land*. In Cornwall, the landscape features appear in this context in place names and, importantly for this thesis, as a structuring device in the *Ordinalia*.

There are several important stone circles in Cornwall, three at the tip closest to Lands End and four at the other end of the Duchy, in and around Bodmin Moor. Their geographical location makes it hard not to speculate about the purpose of these circles as individual centres and peripheries, but also about their collective position as territorial markers, defining starting points and end points for land-made narratives. The peninsula is dimpled with many other significant circles, playing places or *plen-an-gwarry,* at least as old as the later Middle Ages. These are outdoor theatres where plays were performed by and for the local community. Perhaps the most famous of these are at St Just and Perranporth. But the bounded territory of Glasney College, ostensibly more prosaic and less enigmatic, is the focus for this research.

In the seventies it was a football pitch. Within living memory, a travelling fair camped on the field, their tent pegs disturbing medieval tiles that marked pathways between graves below the wet grass. There is not much to see today. It is a boggy site, mainly used as a place to exercise dogs, but it has not been built on for over five hundred years and remains a place to fill with ideas, dreams, arguments and artworks.

Upstream from river estuaries, the complex tracery of creeks and waterways, impassable at low tide, supported trades that depended on secrecy to survive. Cornwall is associated with many myths around wrecking, piracy and smuggling that exist because of its particular topography, combined with geographic remoteness from metropolitan centres and systems of control. Secrecy was imperative in these circumstances to allow an economy to develop and flourish that was essentially underground. The characteristically independent and culturally distinct character of the region is predicated on this historic otherness associated with language and with communities, compelled to rely on their own resourcefulness to survive, operating outside, or on the fringes of, centralised power structures. Gradually, I discovered an affinity with this anarchic resistance, which slowly began to permeate my research practices. My creative activity, and identity as artist-scholar that emerged alongside it, began to resonate with the desire to resist. This resistance became particularly pertinent as I struggled with the discourses of academia that seemed ill equipped to express the reality of my experiences as a creative practitioner. I needed not only to resist traditional ways to proceed methodologically with the research but also to seek more appropriate, performative and embodied forms of expression for its findings.

The rituals of my own creative practice were initially what interested me most, before any specific curiosity about located Cornish culture. I was anxious about it. I needed to know why I did what I did and whether it had any validity beyond creative conceit or self-indulgence. At the start I was most comfortable describing myself, vaguely, as a writer and professional educator. I was less sure about my identity as a poet or the more generic description of 'artist'. While 'creative practitioner' might be the more neutral, more abstract description preferred by academia, in my day-to-day world, outside the academy, people would often ask 'so – are you are an artist?' I did not know how to carry the weight of the word *artist*. It seemed to have the kind of pedigree associated with a rarer breed than me. So I needed to question how my own identity was performed through the complexities of this research narrative over time, if only to know how to describe myself to research participants.

The word 'interlocutor' is an odd abstracted word that sometimes seemed appropriate on paper, but ironically never when voiced and hanging in the air. Other related questions such as what did it mean to be an artist, could anyone self-identify with this title if they chose to, could you be an artist if no-one knew about your work, if it remained unpublished or invisible in the public domain, if you had no formal art school training, had dogged my adult life.
To be hidden, to be secret, seemed synonymous with amateurism and domesticity and with not being taken seriously. I wanted to engage with complex ideas. I was curious, or perhaps more accurately, hopeful, that in the process of 'doing ' a practice-based PhD my artistic identity would become securer and that, simultaneously, my conflicted sense of unease about this title as a signifier for what I did would diminish.

Glasney College was founded in 1265 and housed twelve secular canons, a chantry house and grammar school, supported by income from sixteen parishes. The church appears to have been approximately two thirds the size of Exeter Cathedral, fortified by towers and a boundary wall. In 2003, Glasney field was excavated and recorded by archaeological teams from the University of Exeter before the exposed foundations of the building were reburied, ostensibly to preserve and protect the findings, but effectively hiding another culturally significant structure, under a cloak of invisibility. In 1979, Deborah Wingfield, in her role as rescue archaeologist, concurrent with the development of social housing at the periphery of the site, surveyed the medieval fragments from Glasney College that had been incorporated, post-Reformation, into the vernacular architecture of Penryn's town centre. It is the site's potential, latent in these distributed fragments and in its buried foundations, that first motivated me to construct a series of images, objects, audio-files and texts, which collectively are the research outcomes, described here as a distillation of the practice.

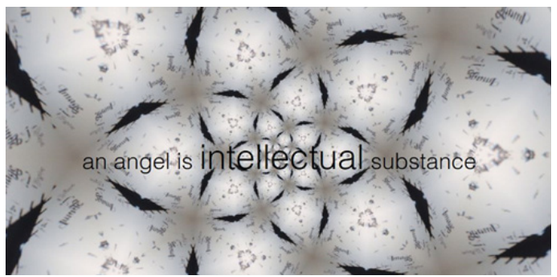
A hundred years earlier Thurstan C. Peter had written a *History of Glasney College* (1903) from his reading of the 15th century Latin texts that comprise the Glasney Cartulary, presently held at the Cornish Records Office in Truro. But perhaps the most important, and contentious, cultural artefact associated with Glasney is the series of medieval mystery plays, known as the *Ordinalia*, composed in the 14th century when the college was at the peak of its influence. There have been several performances of these plays in recent times, designed to be performed in the round, in *plen-an-gwarry*. Miracle Theatre's first production in 1979, for example, was *The Beginning of the World*, an adaptation of the *Origo Mundi* which is itself first of the three plays from the *Ordinalia* cycle.

There is no absolute historiographic evidence to say that the *Ordinalia* was definitely composed at Glasney, but clues in the text create webs of plausibility. It is this uncertainty, in the context of other uncertain fragments that Homi Bhabha might describe as part of the 'language of culture and community … poised on the fissures of the present' (2004: 203) that underpins this research. Trevisa and Glasney function as templates to provoke a cultural imaginary, a *Trevisa Project*. By this I mean that I am not exclusively interested in conventional historiographic research methods nor in practising what came to be known in the 1980s as *new historicism*. I am not a historian, nor a linguist, nor am I a biographer. The *Trevisa Project* is an artwork that utilises aspects of conventional research strategies in these fields and others and is consequently an expression of exposed connections between discrete disciplines, rather than the result of drilling down into a particular field. But because there is so little that remains in conventional archives about the early life of Trevisa to connect him with the site of Glasney, the cultural imaginary that is the product of the research practice began to be contained in a series of illustrated micronarratives or *anecdotae* which sits on a cusp that resonates with Edward Casey's 'tenebrous middle-realm' (1998:37).

Mikhail Epstein (2017) calls for a new kind of embodied humanism to rescue the humanities from what he characterises as their decline as loci for intellectual inquiry in 21st century Instiutes of Higher Education:

..in the twentieth century and especially in its second half, the humanities turned away from human beings and focused on texts..[..].. the humanities ceased to be human studies and became textual studies. They continue to suffer from intellectual autism, having lost the desire to communicate with humans as spiritual beings… Everything in literature is reduced to literariness, and literariness to textuality. There is no biography, no psychology, no living people; only texts conversing with other texts. Almost no one today seems to expect anything from the humanities but readings and rereadings, and criticism rather than creativity, suspicion rather than imagination. There is no human self-reflection, let alone self-transformation (2-3).

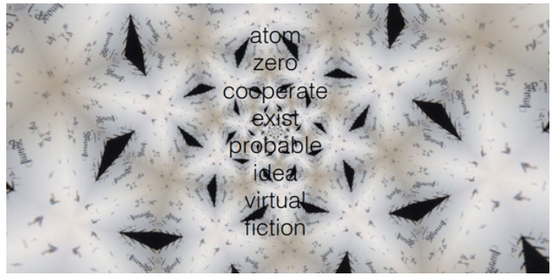
For Trevisa the essence of an angel is i*ntellectual substance*. So did he imagine that an angel was summoned by thought or was it made of thought itself? There was a fractal-like quality to these imaginings that I recognised as part of my own creative process, where self-similar ideas nestle inside one another, like Russian dolls.
I tried to animate what was fundamentally elusive, to create an impression of a choric realm



So although this research could be considered as a search for a poetics to express vocabularies of localization and sitedness, it is a search that attempts to be invigorated, through creative practice, by the humanity of figures that once lived and so avoid the reductiveness of Epstein's *intellectual autism*. At the start of this research, secure in the knowledge that what I wanted to produce was arts-based, I was nevertheless also aware that there was no easy fit for what I intended to do, in terms of genre, no particular university department with which to form an instant affiliation, or find a natural home. The idea for the research was problematic from an institutional point of view, as it did not appear to conform to a neat set of criteria, or category, and it was also hard for me to articulate what the research was about neatly in the early stages, or perhaps more accurately, at every stage. But as the research progressed I discovered a growing interest in the value of what Epstein calls the *transhumanities*, the cross-hatched interdisciplinary zones eliding different areas of expertise that have been traditionally separate. This discovery was deeply reassuring.

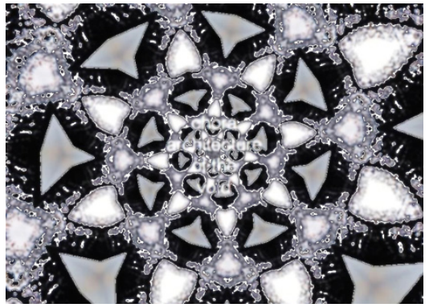
Initially this *poetics* attempted to respond to a key research problem, namely, *how is it possible to express aesthetically the forensic fingerprint of that which is invisible in the historic record?*

My strategy was to make a series of visual, auditory and text-based artefacts, and to record the process of this making, in what I eventually describe as *anecdotae*. The anecdotae coalesce to capture an imagined secret history of unpublished things. These include research outcomes from a gallery based residency, a 20 minute podcast commissioned by *Apples and Snakes* (a national organisation for poetry and the spoken word) and an image/text animation from data produced in a motion capture studio. But as my research activity evolved, it began inevitably to respond to wider, concurrent political debates, outside the territory I had originally imagined that it might occupy, to address ideas around place and located identities in a wider context.



While connections between the site of Glasney College and the figure of John Trevisa are generally under-researched, extensive research has taken place into some of the discrete fields associated with this project, notably by David Fowler (1995) and Emily Steiner (2016), into, for example, Trevisa's identity as a Cornish man and his significance as a writer and scholar in the medieval period.

On the Particularity of Things, a medieval encyclopaedia was completed by 1397, and the *Polychronicon*, a universal history from Biblical times up to the first half of the fourteenth century, was completed by 1385. These translations could be considered as databases for ideas, or *chora*, which is a term used by Plato in the *Timaeus* (c360 BCE) and revisited by many cultural theorists since, including, in the last century, Derrida and Eisenman (1997) and Ulmer (1994), and, more recently, Shanks (2011) and Fradenburg (2015).



the chora felt like a place and not a place, like an architectural principle to describe a void

A fascination with the idea of the chora, with what it might mean and with its relevance, not only to *The Trevisa Project* in terms of form and content, but also to the creative processes that underpin its content, was another crucial starting point.

The idea of *chora* permeates this research because it is, for me, an evocative organising principle, but also functions metaphorically as locus for the generative power of creative processes. I attempt to capture these processes as they evolved in an analytic/evocative auto-ethnography (Pace 2012), which is expressed via different modalities of writing and which I describe more fully in the methods section of this document. The chorographic survey, which comprises *The Trevisa Project*, assembles discrete entities that are mutually affective and co-related and yet, simultaneously, appear to be *iconic* or individually representative of broader, potentially infinite, sub-sets of ideas. So while this *poetics of uncertainty* describes images, objects, texts and sounds that appear to have an indexical relationship to the world, functioning as primary sources, they are instead wholly imagined following an intense period of research. This process reverses creative practices that rely on the appropriation of found fragments to construct new narratives, such as snippets of film footage or old photographs from existing archives. Instead, invented fragments of objects coalesce to provide what Callum Storrie (2006) might describe as an entirely new *delirious museum*. It is a process that emerged alongside the research, in response to the ideas that were uncovered and to the evolving nature of research practices, rather than something that was planned at the outset.

In this way I attempt to foreground a creative process that relies on digression and drift to build layers through which the palimpsest of a deep map of Glasney may be inferred, rather than a process aimed squarely at a linear recovery of shreds of information. The formal languages of research processes and cultures, exchanged in the academy, were things that I was expected to acquire as a research student. But my own practice felt increasingly at odds with this. As the research continued I became aware of an affinity between these processes and the Cornish practice of *wrecking* and began to position myself, as artist-scholar, as a *wrecker*, working opportunistically at the margins and not affiliated to any particular research community. My methodology is then locative and intrinsic to the research topic. I describe this in more detail in *anecdota number nine: wreccum maris*.

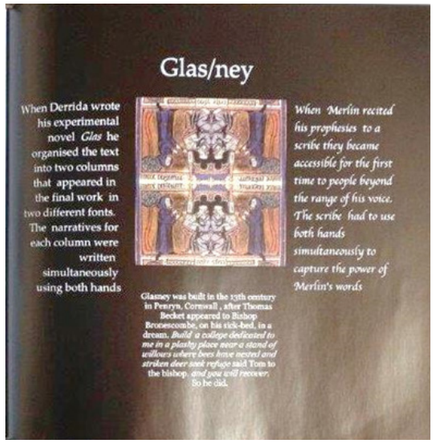
With regard toTrevisa's own translations from Latin into English, their vernacular impact had acoustic properties, designed, as we can surmise from the size of the manuscripts, in some cases, not to be easily portable and for private consumption alone, but to be read aloud to orally literate groups. This made it possible, according to Rollison (2010), to articulate reflexively and discursively, as information about itself, the evolving political and intellectual revolutions of the day. There is also an acoustic and reflexive dimension to my own practice that attempts to mirror the process of reading aloud to orally literate groups, beyond the academy. By this I mean that the groups who responded most positively to the project tended to be already familiar with the vernaculars of art and art production but not necessarily familiar with my research topic until it was described to them in gallery-based conversations. An account of this is provided in *anecdota number seven: a hide for shadows.*

I began to see my own analytic/evocative auto-ethnography as an attempt to construct and articulate my own research vernacular to help me to express vocabularies of localization. This has been influenced by immersive contact with local dialects during an itinerant life, which I also describe in the methods section of this document. So I was entranced by the notion of the *heft*, for example, a word used by shepherds in the Scottish Border regions, to describe a process of familiarising sheep with new territory (Gray 1999). Within my research vernacular the *hefting* process resonates with the way a narrative is visited and revisited in the mind until it becomes conceptually 'localised' and familiar. This dialect word resonates with me because of my particular tribal affiliations with the Scottish/Cumbrian border regions but my increasingly *hefted* locative arts practise also had to pay attention to the local vernaculars of Cornwall, where I was born, to ideas around wrecking, meaning *gleaning* or *beachcombing*.

The *poetics of uncertainty* that articulates the Trevisa Project, in the form of a chorographic survey, creates a series of lived spatialities. In addition to book-based research, the practice outcomes rely on living and working in Penryn over a six year period, on phenomenological engagement with specific sites, working in the field, recording ambient sound, walking, creating photographic documents, working with groups and building installations in gallery spaces. Collectively these occupy a meta-place that could be described as a home for a series of ideas, a delirious museum to archive the project. But the *hefted* material of the *anecdotae*, has, as a correlative, a de-naturalised *unheimlich* or uncanny potential. So the *anecdotae* throughout this research also signal a system under stress, where artefacts, products of this system, are unsettling, surreal and precariously unstable, at a nodal point where a mythical past collides with a fragment of the performed present.

The work-in-progress that is Cornish regional identity is, according to Bernard Deacon (2005), malleable, tense and hybrid, where the linearity of its historical past intersects with moments of performed identities. The mythical past of Cornwall and the discrete fragments of its performative present are reciprocal and mutually informative, so that what we understand 'regional' to mean in a Cornish context, is in a constant state of tension and renegotiation. My *anecdotae* attempt to materialise something that the official record lacks, something that Joel Fineman (1989) might describe as suppressed, accidental, defeated, uncanny or otherwise non-surviving. But it was only as my practice evolved, making and re-making or re-membering, that I started to feel that the specific site of Glasney might function as a microcosm of wider cultural hybridities. So I wanted my chorographic survey to suggest that the relationship to the core, of that which appears to be peripheral, could be endlessly renegotiated. In other words, that the relationship of Glasney College, which might appear to be peripheral to a wider debate about core issues to do with Cornish cultural identity, could be reconfigured, re-membered and reimagined from a variety of perspectives and within various contexts.

Deacon (2005) describes how this renegotiation is at the heart of a fluid discourse between the named place of any region and the bounded world to which it, simultaneously and paradoxically, both belongs and yet is separate from. But it was my multi-arts practice that led me to post-structuralist theories about located culture and histories. I had no idea, at the outset of this research, for example, that the particular uncertainties inherent in my own creative processes and in the relationships between the particular site and the historic figure I had selected, would resonant with the uncertainties in wider discourses about Cornwall, and about what it means to be Cornish, where, according to Deacon (2005) 'simultaneously part of and not part of England' Cornwall 'teeters on the brink of a conceptual and historiographical crevasse' (5). This was an unanticipated gift.



I did not anticipate that the site I had chosen, and the historical figure I would connect with it, would be so contested nor so culturally sensitive. I had initially assumed that the figure of Trevisa, for example, had been forgotten or overlooked, rather than, as it appeared on occasion, deliberately ignored or used to reinforce particular cultural and political agendas. It was not my original intention to construct a radical counter-history, but my *anecdotae* gradually coalesce into an aesthetic provocation in spite of this, because my research developed not only alongside a desire for a devolved regional assembly for Cornwall, amongst Cornish nationalists, particularly in response to the Scottish bid for independence, but also alongside the activities of a Performance Centre at Falmouth University, newly relocated from Dartington.

Glas/ney

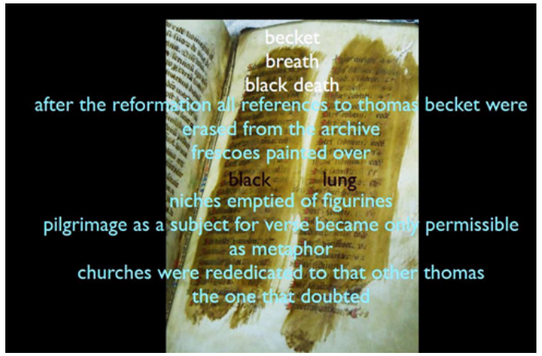
When Merlin recited his prophesies to a scribe they became accessible for the first time to people beyond the range of his voice.
The scribe had to use both hands simultaneously to capture the power of Merlin's words
When Derrida wrote his experimental novel *Glas*, he organised the text in two columns that appeared in the final work in two different fonts. The narratives for both columns were written simultaneously using both hands

Staff and students from the Performance Centre reinvigorated site specific practices, in general, in the area, and then a *Raising Glasney* research group began to focus wider attention on Glasney in particular. In the final phase, writing up the research findings, particularly dramatic political turns of events in the UK and overseas, were impossible to ignore. So my research, which initially attempted to rehabilitate Trevisa within the cultural imaginary of Glasney College, has therefore a serendipitous layer of cultural complexity, resonating, appropriately I think, with the spirit of the *anecdota*.

New historicism celebrates the power of the literary fragment or anecdote, to overturn the grand narratives of the past and to refocus attention on the real rather than the theoretical. It emerged in the 1980s and has its critics. For David Simpson, writing in 2001 in the *London Review of Books* a review of Gallagher and Greenblatt's *Practicing New Historicism* (2001), it was a kind of intellectual conjuring trick 'captivating readers with their improbable production of profound and complex wholes out of seemingly negligible parts'. Simpson wonders whether, by celebrating the power of the enigmatic, Gallagher is not intellectually opting out by providing her readers with narratives that are not provable, nor able to be exposed, from a kind of refuge or position of intellectual safety.

Thirty years on, it seems appropriate to revisit this position, to re-examine what it is to be enigmatic, to refuse to be drawn towards any particular conclusion, not least because of the digital environment which pervades 21st- century life and which was not the case then. I am interested, in the context of this research, in the digital, not at the level of code, nor even as electronic poetry, but as a carrier of meanings that simultaneously transport us beyond what we conventionally understand to be 'real' while failing, in ways that became increasingly essential, to match the power and presence of analogue versions of reality. I am interested, for example, in the use of data capturing, digital technologies to create fictions, which I describe more fully in anedota number eight: *anechoic birds.*

Curiosity about an interstitial zone between beholder and beheld, which to me feels like a third place ripe with possibility, was another key driver towards this research. I was intrigued as I researched liminal, or interstitial territories to discover just how many people speak about an *in-between*. For Paul Carter (1992), for example, it is a space with a particular acoustic resonance.



For Homi Bhabha (2009) the culture of a locality occupies similarly hybrid territory, in the *double time* of history and identity. The innovations of Wright Morris in his *Home Place* (1948) pair photographic images of deserted rooms and empty streets with texts that give voice to a series of invisible inhabitants, evoking their presence vividly in the mind of the reader. So I have structured this document to express the doubleness that I think is crucial in this *poetics of uncertainty*, using different modalities of writing. On the edge of the page I attempt to express the totalising or mythic ideas inherent in more conventional research writing, but in the centre, or heart, I include images and texts that illustrate, forensically and performatively, particular detailed fragments, using a self-reflective or poetic, macro lens. In this way I also hope to establish an *inbetween*, interstitial third place in the mind of readers of the texts. The micro narratives or *anecdotae*, which describe the outcomes of the research, provide additional polyvocal layers of praxis. On occasion different narratives overlap in a kind of cross-hatched space between disciplines or genres. During early iterations of this idea, making multiple bookworks, I was excited to discover Derrida's *Glas* (1974) which, apocryphally, he wrote using both hands simultaneously to create two columns of text.

Fundamentally I had to ask myself, in the empty space that is Glasney field which seemed at the start of this research to be a monument to collective amnesia, what remains and what is lost? Where are the hefted, familiar heres and theres, the absences, desire lines and other colonised trajectories? Re-storying empty spaces, making images and objects that function as props in a series of narratives about a fictionalised past, I attempt to bridge an imagined world with tangible artefacts that carry a phenomenological weight and aura of credibility. In doing so, my intention is to carve out a space for co-creation, for cultural debate and a strategy, a series of experimental ways to proceed. It was during a five day residency at the Newlyn gallery midway through this research that I began to realise the dialogical capacity of my particular creative practice to fold audiences into the work. This evolved via the construction, inside the gallery, of what Frank den Oudsten might describe as a skene, or shelter, that metaphorically became a place of intellectual refuge, neither retreat nor position of intellectual safety, but a thinking space and haptic catalyst for a working method. I discuss this in more detail in *anecdota number seven: a hide for shadows*. So I attempt to articulate *The Trevisa Project* as creative provocation, and uncertainty as a poetics, as a positive value, as a place for ideas and possibility, of liminal hybridity. But this is not romantic realism – *TRIG*, a previous work that I mention in more detail later, articulated the death of romanticism as a value in my own work. The romantic attachment to landscape formally underpinning my practice, while ceasing to feel appropriate and relevant, became, during the period of this doctoral research, a new kind of longing or search for a more feminine sublime. I began to think that this project may have provoked a form of creative non-fiction that occupies a newly emerging genre, part of a discourse around the *metamodern*. Retrospectively, Luke Turner's *Manifesto for the Metamodern* (2011) and its call for oscillation between polarised discourses within systems that can never be completed or closed, seems absolutely sympathetic to my own intentions, particularly article 8 where he proposes a pragmatic romanticism.

> . . .unhindered by ideological anchorage. Thus, metamodernism shall be defined as the mercurial condition between and beyond irony and sincerity, naivety and knowingness, relativism and truth, optimism and doubt, in pursuit of a plurality of disparate and elusive horizons. We must go forth and oscillate!

METHOD: *THE HEFT AND THE HIRSEL*

The idea of arts-based doctoral research is a slippery term which has been variously interpreted by members of Falmouth University's and UAL's academic community. This exegesis attempts to mimic the choric idea of the quarry, shaped by that it gives shape to, which is a definition I first encountered in Derrida and Eisenmen's *Chora L Works* (1997). It simultaneously stores, describes and is structured by my reflective auto-ethnographic practices.

Arts-based research strategies were introduced in the '60s and '70s, prompted initially by newly emerging therapeutic practices in the interdisciplinary fields of art and health (Leavy 2009).
The more recent term *arts based research*, to describe a research methodology, disrupted and renegotiated scientific paradigms and other more traditional quantitative and qualitative ways to acquire and share knowledge. Arts-based methods produced knowledge that could not necessarily be measured, but could be evaluated through various language-based means, such as monitoring audience feedback or levels of engagement. These methods were designed, according to Leavy, to explore, to develop empathy with or to describe a process rather than present fixed results.

I was born in Cornwall. But I quickly became aware during conversations with some local people that this accident of birth is not enough. What seems to matter, disconcertingly, is blood. There is no blood connection in my family history, as far as I am aware, with Cornwall. But what does any of this mean? I have, like many, an itinerant family history. If anyone asks me about my roots I say that I am always drawn to the west – to the south-west and north-west, to the Lake District as well as Cornwall. I then say that I have a Scots-Irish heritage and went to university in Wales so, at some profound level, I belong to tbe Celtic nations and can probably also claim have a smattering of Viking. But now, perhaps more than ever, talk of blood ties makes me uncomfortable. As does any forum where Cornish nationalists preface their speech with "I'm not racist, but...". During this research, living and working in Cornnwall I rented an old farmhouse from a much loved and respected local farmer who had devoted his life to tending the land meticulously and raising cattle in the parish of Mabe on the outskirts of Penryn. The farm building, thick walled, low beamed, granite, was over 300 years old.

This man and the cluster of old buildings he had so carefully restored, seemed quintessentially and unequivocally Cornish until he told me that his parents had arrived from 'up country' and acquired the farm in the 1960s, within my own lifetime, while I was down the road at school in Helston and dancing on Flora Day. If, as seems to be the case for many nationalists, there is a quantifiable measure of Cornishness which is linear and temporal, my claim to Cornishness predated and therefore trumped his, which seems to me to be absurd. Dick Cole, then leader of Cornwall's nationalist party, Mebyon Kernow, remarked in the lead up to the Scottish referendum that whatever the outcome in Scotland, there would be a "massive knock-on impact" in Cornwall (cited in Barford, www.bbc.co.uk/news 18th August 2014). He went on to concede that what actually constituted Cornishness was ambiguous at best, that "there are 100 PhD theses to be written about identity. It's a great philosophical debate."

It was a term that many academics found to be unsettling as it implied that knowledge itself was fluid, negotiable and fundamentally untrustworthy, rather than comprised of a series of valid, reliable and repeatable truth claims.

To an extent this new qualitative paradigm could be regarded as part of a process that feminised research methodologies, which may account for the resistance to it amongst a largely white male intelligentsia that dominated, and arguably still dominates, the academies of Western Europe. Leavy goes on to describe how '[p]opulations such as women and people of color, formally rendered invisible in social research, or included in ways that reified stereotypes and justified relations of oppression, were sought out for meaningful inclusion' (7). For Leavy, the terms *voice*, *disclosure*, *authority* and *representation* were used by feminists to describe the standpoints generated by hierarchical power-structures in society and to prompt a critical discourse about these related issues in the research. The vernacular that is used to describe the rituals and protocols inherent in traditional research initially made me feel anxious and alienated from research cultures, without quite understanding why. But gradually I began to suspect that it was the discourses around research that I was encouraged to use that made me uncomfortable as it seemed full of masculine imperatives to be adversarial, requiring ideas, for example, to be contested and defended. This was not something that felt *hefted* or naturalised in me as an artist-scholar.

The decision to write in an unorthodox way, organising the writing differently, was a deliberate decision, not just to sustain my own interest in the process, but to derail it enough to feel more like my own vernacular, expressed more authentically and naturally in my own voice.

The introduction of performativity as a new paradigm in the creative arts, by Brad Haseman in 2006, distinguishes the research produced by and through creative arts as something other and separate from the qualitative research produced by other disciplines. Its defining features grew out of theatre studies and came to describe the research activity of all artists and creative practitioners as fundamentally dynamic and transformative. Haseman's term for this activity was 'performative research'. I was pleased, or, perhaps more accurately, relieved to discover this methodological strategy as it seemed to resonate with my own way of working, which shelters under the umbrella of *performance writing*. The shared characteristics of Haseman's notion of performativity and my own understanding of *performance writing* was that research activity, associated with them both, involved writing that was accompanied by, or was the by-product of, action.

I remember a band of plastic lily of the valley wound into my hair on Flora Day. I was watchful, observant and shy. My childhood is full of removals, upheavals and disconnected relationships with new places. I went to a dozen different schools in several UK locations because I was a Forces Child. Perhaps it was because of this that I became especially sensitive to place.

Places impacted on me viscerally so that I experienced, frequently, what Edward Casey (1997) might describe as place-panic when the unfamiliar or unknown place feels desolate and uncanny. In spite of my disrupted education and unsettled home life I went to a small grammar school in Somerset, passed exams, continued to love art and creative writing but was steered away from these loves, by my school, towards a more 'academic' future.

It seemed to have a shared root in JL Austin's seminal series of lectures during 1950s, *How to do Things with Words*, where he first described how performative 'language acts' have real, consequential effects in the world, rather than just describe or report them (Austin 1975).

One of my first tasks as a doctoral artist-scholar, rather than as a creative practitioner operating outside the academy, was to formulate a research question by asking what I was, actively, trying to find out through my practice. This question, though perhaps an obvious one, is not one that I would routinely ask at the outset of any phase of creative production, where the practice would normally precede the interrogation of material outcomes. This practice includes the production of different modalities of writing that intends to occupy contested spaces, between fictions and histories, to question, according to Bergvall's definition of the function of performative text, 'the authority of language with language, through language, as well as beyond language' (2013). In this way I aim to produce work that is atomised, yet coherent, tense and, hopefully, unignorable.

I use language as image and object in diverse forms. Writing released from the page was a defining feature of this practice before I had heard of *performance writing* and before I embarked on this particular research journey. The discovery that what I did, that what was already naturalized in me as a creative practitioner, might belong to some kind of category, if not exactly a genre, was surprising, but it is a category that is useful in the context of a discussion around methodology generally and performative methodology in particular.

I initially wondered whether a performative research methodology might best be expressed through performance writing as they seemed to share a symbiotic relationship, even if, as Bolt remarks 'the performative turn and a performative paradigm are two different, if related, beasts' (2008). So this document has emerged as an attempt to articulate praxis, the turn and the paradigm, the practice and the theory, simultaneously to expose their differences and relationships. The doubled structure of the writing, organised on the page, invites the reader to read in a conventional linear fashion, but there is also the potential for this linearity to be disrupted by reading laterally, across the columns, at will.

At the local sixth form college, I fell in love with several individuals who were doing a Foundation course in Art and Design and went into mourning for the creative future that at the time I thought was denied me. So I rebelled. The week before I was supposed to take Oxbridge entrance exams I jumped on my motorbike and drove it away. John Beckett, who was then Dean of Humanities at my sixth-form College, did his best to steer me back onto a course that felt right. I look back on the sensitive, kindly pedagogical dedication and expert attention that I received at this time and feel hugely privileged and grateful.

I ended up on the Foundation course myself as a member of a small experimental cohort of disparate teenagers with unconventional backgrounds, in terms of secondary art experience. Two of us went to Dartington.

The art department at university did not provide the holistic, integrated field of inquiry across art and literature, mediated through practice that I had hoped for. Instead my studies felt discrete, atomised and superficial. In my second year I decided to focus purely on English Literature, and that meant compulsory modules in Anglo Saxon, Middle English and Middle French. It was a compromise.

I went to Aberystwyth, not because of its Theatre department, of which I was wholly ignorant, but because it was possible to take a combined honours there in practice-based Art – not just Art History - with English Literature. What I actually wanted to do was everything that my Foundation course had offered – ceramics, arc welding, etching, painting, screen-printing, photography, painting and drawing, forever, because what I was fundamentally interested in, though I would have been hard pushed to articulate this at the time, was not any particular specialism but the relationship between matter and ideas.

Bolt's critique of Haseman's performative paradigm resists his conflation of the terms 'performativity' and 'performance', which, for Bolt, has become too commonplace in theatre studies, and in the creative arts generally. She describes how this conflation runs counter to Austin's speech act theory, more complex than his original binary of constative or descriptive versus performative utterances. Austin's theory became triadic – the locutionary dimension which corresponds to the construction of meaning or semantics, the illocutionary, which has a force or impact in the world ('I find you guilty') and the perlocutionary, which is the consequence of the utterance, in terms of the effect it has on its hearers or readers. This theory was further expanded by Judith Butler to include embodied knowing through bodily acts in addition to speech. Bolt goes on to describe how, for both Austin and Butler, *performance* relies on a subject such as that which is deliberately acted out in a theatre, whereas *performativity* has no subject but is instead 'iterative and citational', involving 'repetition rather than singularity' (2008). Whilst she acknowledges that Butler is referring to everyday performances, such as those that materialise gender, Bolt nevertheless believes that, in the context of arts based research, Butler's idea of performativity, which is practiced as re-iteration and convention, underpins the generation of new knowledge in the creative arts, rather than ' the conscious, singular, transgressive act of the artist' (2008). The artist only comes into being through the repeated conventions of her practice; she does not precede the practice. Only when the practice is re-iterated is the artist-scholar able to map its patterns and conventions and thus discern 'the ruptures that shift practice' (2008). In asking myself what it was that I was trying to find out, the answer was, I suspected, how to recognise, identify and articulate these moments of rupture as I struggled to construct my *poetics of uncertainty.*

In the beginning I imagined that this would be a fairly conventional self-reflexive, auto-ethnographic enquiry. I was interested in praxis, in my own creative process and knew I would have to keep some kind of record. I started to keep a research blog, and then another one artificially backdated and contrived. I set up a website using iWeb, which, frustratingly, became redundant, no longer supported by Apple. I set up another website. The material shifted. The record was falsified, sabotaged by the inbuilt obsolescence of digital technologies. I came to rely heavily on physical notebooks, on the materiality of my artistic activity. I would like to say that I had a plan, a time-frame and a methodologically sound way to proceed from the outset. I did manage to articulate these things at the point of registration and confirmation, but, in truth, they never held true for long. Katy Macleod (cited in Boyce-Tillman 2014) writes perceptively about the dilemma of the practice-based researcher whose practice often results in the destruction of creative outcomes, in false starts, blind alleys and fresh beginnings so there is no accretion of context to discuss in an exegesis. In my own case, the residue of performed academic research activity, a peculiar hybrid or chimeric creature floundering in the wake of the research trajectory, began to interest me almost as much as the intentional outcomes of my practice. I slowly began to suspect that this chimeric creature, an aggregated series of texts that included bids for funding, proposals for residencies, conference presentations, writings for symposia, emailed correspondences, public lectures and journal articles, was possibly the most authentic text-based record of my research that I could claim, because, like life, it had happened *off-camera*, an un-self-conscious by-product of practice, while I was, in effect, busy doing something else. It seemed to have a weight and the kind of historiographic reliability that I would be excited by if I had come across a similar record while researching somebody else's life. I decided that it might be possible to use these texts on occasion to build an analytical, rather than a purely evocative auto-ethnographic account of the research, in order to identify themes, points of departure and, crucially, moments of rupture where any contribution to knowledge might be most coherently articulated, in the fragile rhetoric of anti-method.

So, once again, I became disaffected and spent most of my time as an undergraduate wandering through the hills and along the coastlines of mid Wales. I spent some time writing a dissertation, based on a Middle French version of Parcival and the Grail Legend – Chrétien de Troyes' Conted del Graal - to avoid having to take one of my end of year exams. But I was hardly a candidate for a career in academia, I was lucky to graduate at all. The Celtic idea of a 'thin place', a specially resonant location where it is possible to slip from one way of being into another, haunts me. I sometimes think of this thin place as having an interiority - that old obsessions re-emerge, unbidden, in our creative practices, migrating across the thin places in our souls. When the topic for my doctoral research found me decades later I had completely forgotten my early intellectual fascination with the Middle Ages.

I am not impressed by the passivity of my undergraduate self, mooning around the countryside, waiting for something to grab my imagination and stir my heart. I want to reach back in time and give myself a good shake. But I also recognise the attitude of mind that became eventually naturalised as part of my creative process. The deep listening during phases of incubation when immersed in creative activity, later in life and most pertinently during particular stages in this doctoral research, was then a less structured, instinctive engagement with the natural world to help me find out what it was I had to do next, how to proceed. Eventually, it was compassion for individuals who were denied, through no fault of their own, access to the world of ideas that motivated me enough to apply to the University of Bristol and to work towards a PGCE in special education.

Ruptured points of departure, signalling insights or changes in practice, would reveal that which Bruno Latour describes as 'black boxed' (cited in Earl 2014), the knowledge that is normally tacit in creative activity.

As lived experience is best understood through lived and told stories and as we build identities and create a sense of ourselves through narrative (Ricoeur 1991) a digressive, autobiographical summary and a brief biography for the ideas underpinning the research, at this point may help to establish an ontological foundation for this doctoral enquiry

Discovering Michael Shanks was a breakthrough moment. Writing with Mike Pearson in *Theatre/Archaeology* (2001), he alerted me to the term 'chorography', the Platonic idea of the chora, and to the possibility of *deep-mapping* as a research method:

> 'Reflecting eighteenth century antiquarian approaches to place, which included history, folklore, natural history and hearsay, the deep map attempts to record and represent the grain and patina of place through juxtapositions and interpenetrations of the historical and the contemporary, the political and the poetic, the discursive and the sensual; the conflation of oral testimony, anthology, memoir, biography, natural history and everything you might ever want to say about a place …' (64-65)

William Least Heat Moon (1991) also describes his multi-layered document of the people and places of Kansas as a 'deep map'. But I felt that I needed to make a deep map of what might be described in Celtic terms as a *thin place*, a pre-Christian expression to describe somewhere with the hallucinatory potential to pass from one way of being to another. The *thin place* that I wanted to speak about was an empty field in the centre of the town of Penryn in Cornwall, a site formally occupied by a medieval seat of learning called Glasney College.

Previously, my other site specific works, the *Trig and Lightwife* projects, had responded to historically verifiable characters that had tenuous, or under-researched, connections with particular sites. I searched for a similar historical character sitting in the shadows, penumbric or invisible in the literature about Glasney, and eventually, through immersing myself in conventional desk based research, came across the figure of John Trevisa.

If the auto-ethnographic component of the research inquiry necessitates an introspective, self-reflexive inquiry, the deep map that I wanted to build around the site of Glasney and the figure of Trevisa, according to Shanks, would involve a mixed-methods approach that conflated the subjective with the objective to 'represent the grain and patina of the place' (64). Shanks, an archaeologist with rigorous research methods honed in the social sciences, is sceptical about his own discipline's ability to capture the spirit of a place through the arid accumulation of data alone. He articulates this scepticism in his *Archaelogical Manifesto* that calls for post-disciplinary practices to work collectively on what remains of the past in order to provide a guide to the future, so that 'we are all archaeologists now' (2013).

I worked for several years as an associate lecturer in FE, teaching young people with a variety of complex emotional, physical and intellectual needs. Then, while studying part-time for a Master's Degree (Creative Arts in Education with Malcolm Ross at the University of Exeter) I took on work in the School of Art and Design at the same FE college. Suddenly I became responsible for teaching histories and theories throughout the school and, in my thirties, finally felt that I was part of a world that connected my head and heart. But, a couple of years later and pregnant with my third child, a family relocation to Scotland meant that I had to leave that world behind me. It took another four years, on our return to Devon, with the youngest child about to start school, to propel me to a crisis.

I realised blindly and intuitively that
I had to stop waiting for something to happen, stop making work haphazardly on a kitchen table or in the corner of a bedroom while a child slept. I started to perform at open mic events and eventually worked for Apples and Snakes as a performance poet. I began to find my voice and an audience and, through the spoken word, a way of democratising my practice. I did not know about Judith Butler. I did not know that the artist only comes into being through the repeated conventions of her practice, she does not precede the practice, but retrospectively I recognise the validity of this claim, because that is how it felt then.

But Paul Reilly, a pioneer of virtual archaeology, describes data collection as a creative activity, where our knowledge of the past, in archaeological terms, is constructed and provisional, rather than frozen in one particular moment, which might be the time of an excavated object's discovery or its original interment

'there aren't archaeological facts out there' awaiting discovery, no stable singularities ready to be clove off with epistemological cleavers. Rather, all these elements are relational, real but conditional. They are chiseled out and sculptured (2014)

His term *additive archaeology* (2014) refers to 3D printing and its implications for scholars and the general public, for example, the Smithsonian's ambitious X3D project which aims to digitise 137 million iconic artefacts in its collection so that they can become available as files ready to be printed three dimensionally anywhere in the world.

> 'Printing artefacts, monuments and cultural landscapes is established technologically, and is already starting to disrupt both transcultural and disciplinary discourses and narratives as direct access to these e-cultural entities by almost anyone, almost anywhere, to aggregate and disaggregate, to materialise and rematerialise them in any transcultural space, effectively disintermediates the opinions, interpretations and 'authority' of archaeologists and cultural resource managers. A richer multivalent archaeology is emerging' (2014)

For Reilly this ability to access the materiality of the artifact precisely in three dimensions by 'almost anyone, almost anywhere' disrupts the knowledge hierarchies of specialists and is a seductive but, I think, ultimately misleading idea. The technologies necessary for 3D printing are not especially cheap nor are they ubiquitous. They tend to be managed, maintained and funded by specialist institutions, such as HE establishments and museums, and generally available only to privileged minorities lucky enough to have received the kind of education that would equip them with, not only the means to access the resource, but also, crucially, to interpret its context. I have misgivings about the 3D printed object, in terms of its auratic potential to emanate presence, in the same way as the original, especially once translated via the printing process, into a different material, such as white plastic polymer or metal, to that which would have been readily available when the original artifact was constructed. However, it was clear from emerging ontological debates in the field of archaeology that the deep map I wanted to construct, as part of research practice informed by Michael Shanks and Mike Pearson, might have to engage with arguments around analogue and virtual, singular and dispersed forms of knowledge, around knowledge hierarchies and virtuosities. It would also involve softer, irrational and more intuitive creative processes, less easy to articulate in a conventional exegesis. My own research methods therefore included, to interrogate these ideas, the making of hybrid objects in real and virtual spaces, ludic interventions using film and sound files, artist bookworks as singular analogue objects and interactive, animated e-book versions of the same bookwork.

Whenever I could I tried to write and paint, but teaching young people with profound learning difficulties in FE during the day, and organising classes for adults with low levels of literacy in the evenings, made me reluctant to focus my attention on the production of what felt like elitist outputs, such as slim volumes of poetry that only other poets would ever read. I wanted to democratise my practice somehow but was not sure how to begin.

Heidi Stephenson, who was then responsible for organising Apples and Snakes in the southwest, introduced me to Simon Persighetti, who commissioned me to make work for the Exeter tEXt festival. It was 2006. The theme of the festival that year was travel writing. I decided that I would make work about the Victorian explorer William Wills, that it would take the form of a multi-site installation at three points of a geographic triangle. At one of these sites the work would be about his imagined early childhood as he played on Orley Common, the oldest untouched piece of land in Devon, near his family home in Ipplepen.

The word *chorographic* in my research title was impossible to resist, but risky. For Edward Casey, the Platonic idea of the chora as expressed in the *Timaeus* is a receptacle that contains all the information about a location, or zone, as well as the matrix of its invention. The term is, for Thomas Rickert, mysterious and troubling (2007) and while I do not find the idea of the *chora* easy to imagine, I sensed that a chorographic survey could include everything; it could utilise all the multi-modal methods necessary to create a deep map of the Glasney site – political and poetic, discursive and sensual, juxtaposed and interpenetrated, as Michael Shanks describes. It would also answer a deep longing to explore the relationship between matter and ideas which had originally surfaced in my Foundation year. But its infinitely expansive potential made it tricky to put a boundary around the research. Just how deep did a deep map have to be? A chorographic survey could give me enough rope, as one of my supervisors remarked, to hang myself by.

Early on in the research I came across the work of Wright Morris. *The Inhabitants* (1940) and *The Home Place* (1948) were innovative photo-journals, the first of their type, pairing unpeopled images of houses and interiors with dialogue. The reader was obliged to make an imaginative connection between the place or object depicted in the photograph and the invisible, not illustrated, character behind the text. *The Inhabitants* is a photo-essay but reads like a series of fragments from a film script, accompanied by images of streets and buildings that look shallow and abandoned, like a set from a movie. The reader needs a level of interactivity, and consequently, emotional investment, to navigate their way through the work, supplying the narrative arc of the story. The work relies on *ekphrasis*, the relationship between image and text, to engage the reader and to imbue the images with a sense of the uncanny, the *unheimlich* quality that runs counter to the titles of the work.

I remain fascinated by the way
that these carry the weight of a
documentary even though, as I gradually
realized, the images and texts are fictional or
arbitrary pairings, with some photographs recurring in other
contexts in later work. But the understated, spare depictions of
the detritus of human habitation, an empty bed or glimpse of a
room reflected in the uneven surface of a cheap mirror (see fig.2),
speak eloquently and movingly of the people who belonged to the
place, of their poverty and their struggle, without needing to show
them, except, perhaps, obliquely, or from behind. The photo-
texts in combination evoke feelings of pity and nostalgia for a
world that had seemed intact, with its own rhythms and rituals, but
a world that was under threat. The locale of the Nebraskan plains in the
1920s is the theatre of Wright Morris' childhood but the elegiac quality
of his work about the people and places of the American mid-West
transcends this autobiographical specificity to become about a
quiet, more universal sense of loss and longing.

I embarked on a series of rituals that included walking the bounds of the common every week between the winter solstice and the spring equinox. I documented these micro-journeys photographically and in paint. I gathered dialect words that would have been current when Wills was alive, wrote poetry, made books from a series of concertinaed mirrors with words and images printed in reverse, so they became legible only in reflection. I installed this last piece on a windowsill in the local parish church where the Wills family would have worshipped, so that it animated as people walked past, down the aisle. Here, at last I felt that I had discovered a personal style where I could express ideas about site, history and fiction through a multi-arts practice. I felt, for the first time, in my element.

The work was called Trig, short for trigonometry, the art of the navigator, but it was also an older English word meaning truth or troth or promise. It marked a turning point, a moment when I started to take myself more seriously as a creative practitioner, but it also marked a radical sea change, philosophically in the world of ideas that informed the work. People remarked on its elegiac qualities and I began to realise that it seemed to signal the death of Romanticism in the work, in the failure, for example, of Nature to function as a redemptive power in the work or to offer much in the way of consolation. The Trevisa Project is therefore, to an extent, a response to a question I was struggling to find then namely, in my post-Christian culture, if I cannot look to Nature for meaning, spiritually, for consolation, where can I look? Much later In this doctoral research process I heard a talk at the *Landscape, Language and the Sublime Conference* held at Dartington in 2016, by Louise Ann Wilson about her Warnscale project and something inside me quickened. I realised that my quest was motivated in part by a need to articulate a more feminine sublime.

Fig.1 Wright Morris 1968 from *The Home Place*

The excitement I felt when I stumbled across his work was one that grew out of a sense of recognition. Here was a kind of historical precedent for the kind of work that I wanted to be part of the deep map for Glasney. It sat on a cusp between history and fiction. It was site-specific. It included images and texts. Wright Morris had devised a new kind of document – a photo-text bookwork - and crucially for my own research, seemed simultaneously to have invented a particular kind of vernacular that would be readily understood, not only by its readers but also by the people who were its subjects. The methodological implications for me were clearer in that I then knew that if my research was not conventionally socially-engaged, it would nevertheless have to deal with what I understood the term *vernacular* to mean; it would have to find a way to be interactive and participatory, so that the audiences for the work could somehow be folded inside it through a common language.

The research trajectory, in terms of participatory methods, began conventionally enough. I leafleted cafes, libraries and bars in the immediate viscinity of the Glasney site. I knocked on doors and had doorstep conversations with people. I attended local artist and writer community groups and invited them to participate. I held a meeting on the Penryn Campus for those people curious to know more about what happened 'up there'. I visited the local museum and talked to people associated with the local historical society, who were interested and helpful and expressed a wish to work in a general sense more closely with Falmouth University. I introduced them to academics, newly relocated from Dartington to the Performance Centre on the Penryn Campus. I was given a guided tour of the town and shown what the historical society understood to be fragments of Glasney and, controversially, where they thought that the fragments had been deliberately removed. I talked to private householders to gather their version of the story about the reasons for this. Slowly, a picture began to emerge that was not to do with any kind of deep understanding of what Glasney College meant now, nor once upon a time, nor what the *Ordinalia* represented culturally for the town of Penryn. The majority I spoke to vaguely described the field as being the site of an old monastery. One person claimed to have seen two ghostly figures in monks' habits walking there early in the morning. No-one had heard of Trevisa. The dominant discourse that emerged was a system under stress, full of internal recriminations, tensions and generalised unease between town and gown.

Whilst the town was impacted by the presence of the new Combined Universities of Cornwall, located at the periphery, this was sometimes perceived as a process of gentrification, rather than regeneration, where multiply let student houses made it unaffordable for local young people to rent homes in the area, for example.

There were some affinities between what I did and the activity of the Situationists, Guy Debord and, later, psycho-geographers. But the work did not sit at the nexus of geography and psychology in quite the same way, perhaps most crucially because it was not about urban spaces. I was not a city-based flaneuse, I was predominantly interested in landscape and rural communities, past and present, and I was not just writing, I was also making. I decided, with no knowledge of Kenneth White, to invent a word that might best describe my practice, and that word was *geopoetics*. When I discovered that there already was a Scottish Centre for Geopoetics, focussed around the production of writing to articulate and enhance a set of ecologically sound relationships between people and the planet, it was exciting. I began to hope that perhaps what I was making and doing was not the product of a set of isolated impulses with no contemporary relevance, but was perhaps something that could strike a nerve and that might resonate with a more global zeitgeist.

This was naturally resented, even if the landlords, hiking the rent, were local Cornish people. There was also a general misconception, hard to shake, that the campus was not shared by two universities but was the exclusive province of Exeter University and that the School of Art, in the centre of Falmouth town, was what was meant by Falmouth University. This fuelled deeply held resentments and a sense of exploitation, of the Cornish by the English, specifically Devonians, with all the revenue generated locally and then disappearing 'up country'.

But there was also an air of loss and longing. I discovered, as I participated in events organised by individual lecturers based in the new Performance Centre on the Penryn Campus, that there was a palpable sense of nostalgia, homesickness even, amongst displaced academics, for Dartington and its radical pedagogies, and quiet hunger to become *hefted*, locally integrated in their new locale. Equally, there was a long standing ad hoc community of older people, who self-identified as writers and artists, living in the area. They tended not to have had much exposure to contemporary practices and so, when I talked to them about the ideas for my research, naturally enough, they were initially sceptical but then keen to absorb them into their own practices, rather than participate in mine. There seemed to me to be a risk at this stage, that my research might become didactic, something that I had not intended. I found myself letting go, watching other groups start to make work about Glasney and its site and searching for my own way to proceed. Socially-engaged arts practice was not something, I quickly learnt, that fundamentally interested me, in the context of this particular project. I was not trying to create a platform for other people to stand their own creative practices on but I could really sense, and was sympathetic towards, the desire for visibility, for funding, for recognition, amongst some local art networks, sometimes expressed as frustration with Falmouth University's emerging profile on a local and national level. The university on the hill, for some local artists in their sixties and seventies, was a real Johnny-come-lately, stealing all the limelight and the money. This system under stress however, that Fineman might have recognised, was the ideal provocation for a body of locative work that I could express as a series of *anecdotae*. As someone who had worked for most of their professional life with disadvantaged members of communities, however, as an enabler for their creative work, I knew instinctively that this time my doctoral research would not take this path. It would be localized and self-localizing as it searched for a vocabulary of localization.

In September 2010, on arriving in Cornwall to live and to work at Falmouth University and to begin work on my doctorate, I looked around for a site through which to pay attention to this mode of working. I was searching for an under-researched subject that would allow me to immerse myself in this new locale, reflect on my practice and to understand more about what I was doing and why I was doing it, in the process of attempting to construct new knowledge about the site itself. In a sense the field of this research would, I guessed, aggregate through the process of paying attention, both through the practice and theoretically, through the conventions of academic study. The research-theory and the research-practice would be mutually informative and co-creative.

The vernacular, in the context of this research, refers to both its physical and textual elements. My original intention was to map the dispersed granite fragments of the Glasney College building that had been incorporated, post-Reformation, after the building collapsed, into the houses and boundary walls at the medieval heart of the town of Penryn. I wanted to collect the stories that belonged to people who believed that their home had a physical fragment of the college embedded inside it. I wanted to know what, if anything, this fragment meant to them, and then to use audio files that emerged from these conversations to build a sound-walk that followed the route of the stones of Glasney. I had hoped that the narrative would be co-created by me as listener and by the teller of the tale. I realised that there were ethical implications associated with this transaction and that ethics had a historicity. Older people that I spoke to, for example, were from a generation that had a positivist conviction, as an absolute point of principle, that what they were saying was *true*. It was harder for some of them to understand when I tried to explain that we made up our histories, that our narratives were provisional, formed from experiences that were mediated and therefore never fully authentic. But in the end the sound walk did not surface from the research in the way I had anticipated at the outset. Sound files gathered during the research emerged as podcasts that were themselves only elements in a richer and more complex series of events.

Whilst the building of a sound-walk is not of itself innovatory, at the start of my research I hoped that it would provide an accessible means to share the content and to introduce the character of Trevisa, who did not appear to be widely known. A medieval Cornishman and translator of Latin and Greek texts into the English vernacular, Trevisa had to invent words to express concepts that had not previously existed in English, which initially felt absolutely pertinent to me as an artist-scholar. Prior to Trevisa's translations, only those sufficiently privileged to have had a classical education and thus able to read and understand Greek and Latin texts, had access to the range of philosophical ideas that were contained in the *Polychronicon – a Universal History of Everything* and *De Proprietatibus Rerum* – On the Particularity of Things – a medieval encyclopaedia. Trevisa who was born in 1342 is an almost exact contemporary of Chaucer and likely to have been educated at Glasney College whilst the *Ordinalia* was composed there in Cornish. But the position of Trevisa in the cultural imaginary of Cornwall is problemmatised by the absence in the record of him ever translating anything into what some Cornish nationalists describe as his *mother tongue*, though it is debatable whether, as the son of an MP from Summercourt near Newquay, at the end of the fourteenth century, his first language was in fact Cornish.

When I spoke about this in a public lecture in Penryn Town Hall, Trevisa's contribution to the emerging corpus of texts written in the English vernacular, which supplanted Norman French as the language of power in England during his lifetime, was not seen, certainly by some local people, as a reason to celebrate his life or his literary achievements. These achievements possibly also include, as I discuss in *anecdota number five: goky and the air museum*, the translation, with Wycliff's team at Oxford, of the Bible from Latin into English (1384) and the 'b' version of *The Dream Visions of Piers Plowman* (1368). In this context vernacular is a contested term, and Glasney, as a place to be celebrated because of, amongst other things, its connection to Trevisa, is a contested site.

There were epistemological implications with this mode of enquiry. I would be presenting knowledge as artistic work, not only through its analysis and interpretation. This infers that what I intended to produce through my practice would have the same cultural weight or equivalence to other kinds of research findings. While the word *findings* felt right for both the products of theory and of practice, these binaries felt redundant and would, I suspected, be differentiated not in the totality of the research but only at specific moments, when prompted to explain, hesitate or revise. I also suspected that these moments might best be articulated at a nexus where the modalities of practice, which feel horizontal, coincide with the vertical trajectory of a time-frame

I also lacked confidence, not in my practice as such, but in my track record as a practitioner. I knew that I wanted my research to be practice-based but, particularly as one of the oldest in my cohort, was also very aware that I had no established history of publication in a conventional sense. I had not been through any high level art school training nor attended any of the more prestigious universities. If anyone asked me where they could find out more about my work, its solitary, performative essence meant that I had very little to show them. I was more or less invisible in the archives that had anything to do with contemporary practice, which may, of itself be unconscious motivation for my search on the edge of the historically disappearing.

As my practice unfolded, the call for a greater autonomy via a devolved regional assembly for Cornwall became more vociferous amongst the nationalist community. My research methods were challenged by this and had to evolve to respond to the sensitivities and uncertainties in the debate. This experience underlined for me some of the differences, methodologically, between *practice as research* and *creative practice;* the former visible and constructed to invite critique, while the latter might be an entirely private philosophical inquiry, concerned, for example, purely with aesthetics and questions to do with technique. I began to realise, initially with dismay, that it did not appear to be possible, in any academic context, or from any ontological position, to make work about place that was not automatically also political. Who the work was for, in terms of its audience, and how it could be disseminated, troubled me. I had deeply held convictions about the necessity to make art democratically. The ideas I was describing though felt intrinsically and unexpectedly elitist. If it was not for the Cornish and by the Cornish, what was its purpose? If I really was determined to free poetry from the confines of the page specifically, and academia generally, then where was I going to place it? How could it be archived in terms which would satisfy doctoral regulations? There was no simple solution to this problem. In the end there was not a single place or outcome but several. Whilst the argument for the purposes of the PhD is situated in a bound exegesis, which is arguably the most tangible version of the deep map, related practice is archived on websites and on a mixcloud site hosted by *Apples and Snakes*.

Ultimately, as my research enquiry continued, in spite of all my endeavours to create new audiences for the work, which I describe more fully in *anecdota number seven: a hide for shadows*, I discovered that there needed, in the context of my own practice, to be a certain amount of self-selection. By this I mean that the most fertile reception for the project occured in galleries, amongst groups of people, from all walks of life, of Cornwall and from further afield, already predisposed to have an interest in contemporary arts practices. My audience, whether I liked it or not, needed to have a set of languages, art vernaculars already in place, to engage with the work, to participate and ultimately to consent to be folded into it. This for me resonates with the concept of *oral literacy* during the medieval period, where books were read aloud to groups of listeners who might not be able to read themselves but who were predisposed to listen and to understand. The music educator Keith Swanick (cited in Haseman 2010) describes this kind of receptive potential as a necessary component of *audition*, where new ideas are tested, not by a naïve group of people, but by an audience that has some knowledge of the field already in place. Reluctantly, I had to adjust my expectations regarding the audience I had hoped for the *Trevisa Project* and with this adjustment my understanding of chora was also modified. I started to imagine not a kind of metaphysical receptacle or container for ideas, shaped by what it is shaped by, but, less literally, I began to imagine *chora* to be a *state of receptivity*, the quality of an open mind, fertile and ready for new ideas to take hold.

I had not anticipated, and so was initially unprepared to negotiate, the cultural weight that my research topic seemed to acquire, in a politically charged forum, once the dispersed fragments of Glasney were symbolically reassembled. In a public lecture at Penryn Town Hall it was not enough to speak as an artist, working with a site. I was required to speak as an artist working with a site that had painful associations for some people. These were expressed in narratives of exploitation, sadness, loss and what Laviolette (2003) decribes as 'deathliness'. For Laviolette, the entire peninsula of Cornwall is a rural graveyard, with stone monuments to mark ancient funerary practices, celtic crosses and decaying engine houses that are remnants from a devasted industrial past, permanently visible in the landscape. These traces are memorials, permanent reminders of an older, wealthier more coherent identity and more confident past.

While I had to date nervously dismissed the necessity for this record, telling myself that it was just a kind of by-product of artistic vanity and creative paranoia, I began to realise that one of the challenges for this research, and one of its key critical discourses, would be around how to store meaningfully the ephemeral essence of site-specific performance, in order to share the research. From conversations with my supervisors I was aware that there was an institutional requirement to make the 'practice element (sic) archivable' preferably inside a traditionally bound thesis, but I was equally aware from talking to library managers, amongst others, that whatever the knowledge depositories in universities of the future looked like, they would not be all about books.

Glasney, dispersed, is invisible and to some extent emotionally inert. Glasney reassembled metaphorically from its fragments, its latent integrity visible in cultural discourse, is affecting. This is something I discuss in *anecdota number four: commun*.

According to Simon Sheikh, there is a mutually informative, if precarious, quality about the relationship between art and politics in arts-based research where research supersedes studio practice:

> 'Art thus has a very privileged, if impermanent, but crucial position and potential in contemporary society. But crucial in its very slippage, in that it cannot hold its ground as a discipline or institutional place. It is not a matter of the politicization of art, but rather of the culturalization of politics' (2009:5).

I knew I did not want to make work that was self-consciously politicized, nor did I think that this work would add to the 'culturalization of politics'. Instead my intention was that it might become a small part of a discourse when it made visible, through the conventions of my reiterated practice, themes associated with my research topic, such as cultural identity, ownership and authority. The way I would try to articulate the discovery of these themes would I hoped provide some pedagogical insight into the the practices of an artist scholar working in higher education. It was only towards the end of my research that I discovered Homi Bhabha's *Location of Culture*, first published in 1994, that seemed to validate my intuitive desire to express my research findings as a series of multi-modal texts. It was here that I encountered the idea of doubleness in writing about cultural identity that might describe, for example, the pedagogies of nationalism, as totalising sets of mythologies, running counter to alternative narratives that express the microcosmic, visceral details of lived experience.

But dematerialised, outside the art studio, there was a risk that this research could become predominantly about spatial knowledge, about site as *thinking-space*. Sheikh critiques the new linguistic turn in academic research in which art-as-research is part of a wider discourse which privileges language over other kinds of production so that 'language and (inter)textuality have become increasingly privileged and important, in art practice' and 'the staging of the discourses around art, the aestheticization of discourse' (2009:1) constitute the research outcome, rather than tangible products of artistic virtuosity.

Whilst this research attempts to describe my creative process as a series of analytical auto-ethnographic texts, articulating how I arrived at my research outcomes, about *how* I know, as much as *what* I know, I resist the total dematerialization of art as research by pairing art as a discursive form with the material traces of artistic production. What I know will always be provisional and, like the original college building, built over a swamp, struggle to hold its ground. I am interested in this struggle. The deep map that surveys the relationship between Glasney and Trevisa, between histories and fictions, between the tale and the telling of it, is eventually defined by the permeable zone at its borders, at the interface between what could and what could not be reliably known. The outer limits of my *poetics of uncertainty* were mapped when its possibilities were exhausted within the time frame set for the research and I felt myself stepping out on to relatively safer and relatively solid (if duller) ground at its perimeter.

There is a real and present tension between the avant-gardist forms and modalities belonging to the research outcomes produced by academics at my institution, and the, academic conventions around its publication, funding and dissemination, to make its insights available to what is defined, narrowly, as *the field* which feel to me to be uncomfortable, outmoded, even arcane. At my most frustrated, this problem seemed to be anti-pedagogical and anti-participatory, a remnant of a patriarchal, imperialist, hierarchical and controlling knowledge culture that did not fit the labile, collaborative, performative, practice driven modes of inquiry that interested me most. The methodological imperative for me, at this point however, was simply to find a way to begin.

In the hiatus between reminiscences, in the pauses to think, in the thinking spaces, the deep map of *The Trevisa project* has a fractured topology, but there was an obligation to work with fragments, to try to preserve as much of the grain of original encounters with the site and the people associated with it as possible. Untidy, overlapping narratives conceal their beginnings and endings and it seemed important to trust that which was elided, was obscured or omitted. Sometimes silences or what was avoided or left unsaid felt as significant as that which I had managed to gather together, to describe or make visible. The final work has the quality of a palimpsest, where objects images and sounds are partially erased, reimagined, over-written and re-used in fresh contexts, like the architectural fabric of the college building itself or like Wright Morris's photographic images. Each discrete entity appears to have its own internal coherence but also appears to be representative of a wider debate, and many tangential narratives. In this way, through the interactive engagement with the speculative imagination of the observer, the choragraphic survey, like reflections in parallel mirrors, might appear to go on indefinitely.

CREATIVE AUDIT: *HISTOIRE ET RÉCIT*

The *Trevisa Project* constructs a *poetics of uncertainty* by addressing ideas around the polyvocal, remembering body, via the slippery relationship between *histoire et récit* or between tales and their telling. This binomial relationship is sometimes expressed as *story/plot* or *subject/discourse* as part of and retrospectively applied to older work, to include Aristotle's *Poetics* (c335 BCE). But whilst the *Trevisa Projec*t is concerned as much with how and why we remember as what we remember, it operates outside the formal territory of narratology's focus on literary analysis to include visual and auditory artefacts and performances, sometimes co-created, that exist outside what is commonly understood to be the text.

The project is a ludic response to the grand narratives of history by utilising the disruptive potential of what Fineman (1989) refers to as the *historeme* or anecdote, to express relationships between histories and fictions as a deep map about a specific site and its past. Thematically then, this creative audit and review of the literature, includes ideas to do with spatially-organised knowledge and vernaculars, that express relationships between people, places and spaces. It describes Highmore's (2006) ideas about inter-disciplinary strategies, which are transformed, when they operate together in the world of the story, to become super-disciplinary, and Bakhtin's idea of the *heteroglossia* (1992) where different voices compete. It also discusses H. Paul Manning's (2003) analysis of the structure of the *Ordinalia*, which connects rituals around *largesse* or gift-giving with the microgeography of Cornwall. At the heart of the project is a void, the *not-known*. It utilises asemic traces, mirror writing and shadow to express lacunae and other absences. The Platonic idea of the chora (trans. 2008), as a matrix of invention is a counterpoint to this idea of void and *central* to this research.

yan

VAL DIGGLE: A POETICS OF UNCERTAINTY

tyan

A discussion of what theorists, including Greg Ulmer (1994) and Thomas Rickert (2007), consider the chora to signify, forms another thematic strand in this review.

The chorographic survey that structures this poetics is a product of my multi-arts practice. Calum Storrie's' *delirious museum* (2006), Jens Brockmeier's *Beyond the Archive: Memory, Narrative and the Autobiographical Process* (2015) and Frank den Oudsten's *space.time.narrative* (2012) inform my ideas about how to disrupt conventional archival strategies to gather, document and present this material, which is often the residue of performative encounters with people, places and materials.

Trevisa's life sits on a cusp between oral memory, ritualised in the songs of the chantry house, and written history, between Latin texts and the emergence of Cornish and English vernacular writings. Shortly after his death in 1402, the manuscript, the product of scribal technologies, began to be superseded by print. But while there is evidence of Trevisa's epic feats of translation – such as his *Polychronicon – a universal history of everything*, (completed by 1385) there is little to tell us about his early life. My poetics of uncertainty is then a deep map that relies on a performative relationship with place to provide a polyphonic web of plausibilities, about the figure of Trevisa and the site of Glasney College, which I describe in this document in a series of micro-narratives, or *anecdotae*.

A modernist fascination with the ruins of the broken, the failed and with the void is for Eric Auerbach (cited in Gallagher and Greenblatt 2001), just as for Fineman (1989), symptomatic of a contemporary inability to capture the touch of the real. For Auerbach, the anecdote is an antithetical corollary for this position. . It is a fragment that contains in itself an essence of completeness that functions intensely, fractal-like, as a cypher for the whole.

The literary fragment is particularly potent, not because it is a consequence of ruination but because it is a condensed abbreviation of a wider totality and thus contains information about cultural events that, when distilled to an essence, feel trustworthy. Slowly, as the research unfolded over a period of months, then years, I began to realize that the chorographic survey of the *Trevisa Project* might re-invest the power of the anecdote by reversing its potential and its function as cultural cypher. My own micro-narratives were constructed after saturating myself in research and were fictional and ludic – playing with what *anecdotae* might look like if the fragments they described had actually existed historically.
I also began to realise that by imagining a secret history I was also resisting archival impulses. My imagined *anecdotae* can never by definition belong to a conventional archive of cultural artefacts, never second guess, or make assumptions about what will be essential to know at some future time.

Jens Brockmeier's *Beyond the Archive* (2015), in the latter stages of this research, introduced me to the idea of a *memory crisis* that occurred in the 1990s and which overturned the idea of the mind as 'a static, all-encompassing memory container' (7) that had dominated memory research in the scientific and clinical community previously. Advances in brain-scanning technologies, combined with studies of groups of previously marginalized individuals recovering from trauma, such as abuse during childhood or when serving in the Gulf War, gave rise to new paradigms where memories are not kept permanently in a dark corner of the brain, like a series of snapshots in a family album, to be retrieved with varying degress of success or failure, but are instead 'reconstructive and dynamic rather than static and monolithic' (8). Importantly for this auto-ethnographic research, Brockmeier focuses attention on autobiographical memory, situating acts of remembering and forgetting in 'an extended cultural landscape of social practices and artefacts' (12) beyond the individual brain or mind.

In 2016, the word of the year nominated by Oxford Dictionaries was *post-truth*. It refers to a political environment where objective facts are less relevant or important when persuading people towards an opinion than making a subjective appeal to their emotions and personal beliefs. When talking to people about climate change, for example, factual information, such as statistics about rising sea temperatures in the Arctic Circle, does not convince people to change, or not change, their behaviours. In a post-truth scenario, people are only persuaded towards forming an opinion if the speaker appears to empathise with their own position. Politicians are then elected into positions of power on the basis of these narratives, and can then go on to make policies that have nothing to do with anything that was communicated through the narratives they expressed during the electoral campaign.

Cognitive dissonance between fact and fiction in the mind of the voter is not important here. What is important is a kind of collective agreement amongst disenfranchised groups that the context for the performance of the narratives, the campaign trail, is itself fictional, a kind of theatre in which the most important message is not that which is the most factually accurate but is that which is most emotionally persuasive, that appeals to personal biases and beliefs, is anti-establishment, anti-intellectual and illiberal. - is rationalised, not reasoned.

So in the roles I variously occupied, chatting to people outside the academy about the work, presenting work more formally in seminars and symposia, breaking the conventional model of the presentation as *performance lecture*, how complicit was I in post-truth behaviours that so alarmed and distressed me when I witnessed them in others?

It was exciting to discover that the particular device he uses to investigate alternative ideas about memory formation, which he refers to as *autobiographical processes*, is narrative as a synthesis of cognitve, affective and linguistic modes. Even the apparently objectified memory attached to a village war memorial or to the memorial placed at the invisible altar of Glasney College, in a corner of Glasney field, is dialogical in the context of Brockmeier's ideas because these objectified memories require a complex interplay between the public and private realm, between the object and an individual's interpretation of it.

According to Brockmeier, the memory crisis is accompanied by what he calls its 'flipside … the memory boom' (18). He describes how postmodernism has transformed western, capitalist societies, characterised by incessant and rapid change, fuelled by the dissolution of traditional forms of authority, by the digital revolution and the complexities of globalization. Traditions are dissolved with dizzying speed and certainties are never-endingly broken down. This makes 'the desire for a memory that makes up for what gets continuously lost' (18) more keenly felt. Brockmeier also points up that in the decade 1998-2008 alone, there were over 9,500 references to 'collective/cultural/social/public/popular memory' in citation indexes for the social sciences (18).

The infrastructure of our built environments reflects this crisis. Brockmeier describes how the castle and the cathedral have been replaced at the heart of modern, western cities with memorials, museums, exhibitions and administrative centres. He is struck by this 'odd dialectic' that has replaced the product of complex systems of public remembering, anchored to the ecclesiastical calendar and the seven day cycle, with ethnological archives such as those you might encounter in a town hall or public record office (19) and remarks that:

> The faster modern life worlds change and traditions of knowledge, religion, ethics and collective memory lose significance, the more energy flows into public practices, insitutions and the creation of artefacts that are supposed to conjure up 'lasting' cultural memories in the face of a permanent loss of stability (19).

Brockmeier's description of the disintegrating archive gave the dissolution of Glasney College, the loss of its chantry house and the redistribution of material fragments of the college buildings about the centre of Penryn, a renewed metaphoric potency for me. It re-energised an imaginative resonance with my own ethnographic position. Whilst the memory crisis he refers to happened within my own lifetime, I began to think about the *Trevisa Project* as a response, in part, to a kind of mirrored crisis in memorialization during the late Middle Ages, despite the dominant position of the cathedral and the castle at the centre of cities in western Europe in that period.

Trevisa's own translation of the phrase 'historico contextu' which is literally 'historical context', is the more nuanced phrase 'the makinge and stories of bookes', which, as Holsinger remarks, implies that public memory is shaped as much by the vessel that contains the narrative as by narrative itself (2011). As scribal technologies were superceded by print, and writings in the English vernacular became more commonplace, the making of books more frequently resulted in serial rather than singular output. Histories became portable, capable of being dispersed into the personal collections of whoever was wealthy enough to establish a library.

Perhaps most crucially, what are the differences between metahistories and post-truth narratives? If the former has a disruptive centrifugal energy, resisting attempts to unify culture, perhaps the latter is centripetal, bringing everything to a centre to congeal around old rallying points

The key, I think, might lie in Highmore's idea of radical plurality and the messy polyphony of competing voices.

I know that, to be engaging, my chorographic survey requires a texture that is interwoven, nubbly as *slubbed* silk and as hard to untangle.

But paradoxically this survey must also be assembled lightly and then capable of being disassembled into its discrete components, in a series of endlessly renewable permutations.

(*Slub* – an imperfection, a softer and thicker section of yarn, slightly twisted, sometimes purposely included for particular effect)

This gave the emerging *commun* the ability to document, self-reflexively, the politics of the day, and in doing so, to articulate a securer cultural identity (Rollinson 2010). The memory crisis at the time would seem then to include a gradual widening in the spectrum of authority, from a monolithic narrative endorsed by Church and State, to include the autobiographical testament of individuals like Julian of Norwich.

Narratives that had been embodied and orally transmitted were, as literacy spread, externalized through writing to become a meandering system of signs. This was reproducible and, crucially, capable of being subject to scrutiny by individuals beyond the range of the writer's voice, to be judged as an accurate or inaccurate version of the original document, to be held up as a forgery or fair copy. But the written narrative was as a consequence also devoid of the author's bodily inflection, like the cognitive dissonance created by a text message substituting a phone-call, clumsily accompanied by an emoji. Without embodiment a message was at risk, capable of being misinterpreted or falsified.

For Lamarque and Olsen (2002) fiction is 'the deliberate flouting of the link between language and reality' (33).
It is grounded in the action of the fictive utterance, an interactive dialogue between speaker and audience. Fiction is tacitly understood via the conventions of this relationship.
It is convention-driven and constrained by the practices of storytelling. It normally requires cognitive distance between fact and fiction and a recognisable context for the narrative, which is itself understood to be fictional. When these conventions break down, popular legend has it that naïve audiences listening to a 1938 radio production of H.G Wells' *The War of the Worlds* (1898) for example, which included simulations of contemporary news reports, imagined that America was about to be invaded by aliens or, equally apocryphally,
a first time theatre goer jumped on stage to rescue Desdemona.

The conventions of presentation, in the context of my own research, are pertinent.
As this enquiry unfolded I found that I variously occupied roles where I was expected to produce a fiction or series of fictions, in the context of a gallery space,
a public lecture or performance, for example, and at other times was trusted to provide a factual account of events, such as those presented in conferences and symposia, that could be described, loosely,
as histories. These conventions became particularly blurred and multi-layered during 'performance lectures' and during a 5 day residency at the Newlyn Gallery where
I installed work related to the *Trevisa Project*.
I remained present in the gallery to chat to gallery visitors about the work, whilst simultaneously producing work that folded the visitors and our conversations inside it. The residency culminated in an artist's gallery talk that summarised the history of
the week's events. An installation, a *hide for shadows (see anecdota number seven)* emerged during the residency and became, in a sense, its text,
a performative trace of the event that narratology does not typically address.

tethera

It is perhaps through engagement with multi-modal or polyvocal narratives that the audience can become active in my storied spaces.

This thought consoled me a little, but did not help me to become reconciled with the idea that in order to be active, the audience probably needed some information about the vernaculars of art and art making to be *hefted*, to be already in place.

A hide for shadows experimentally captured images of the remembering bodies of gallery visitors as I attempted to transform the place of the gallery into a practiced place. The visitors in this way became active, not only in the artwork and the place/space of the gallery, but also active in the place/space of the *Trevisa* narrative. The experience of working in the gallery, to produce something that was co-created by its audience, shifted my understanding of what audience meant in the context of this research. I began to be aware of the body as site in which all of the experiences of a life are contained, ingrained in the lines on a face, in gesture, tone of voice and stance, for example, and retrievable only through a complex series of narratives. I came to consider *audience*, not only as virtual visitors to a website or as passive witnesses to an event, but more as process, feminised and labile. Audience began to include the intimate, subtle exchange between individuals, to co-construct narratives, internalised through shared experience, in the body, which was as important as any trace of performative activity that might persist externally. The idea of a feminised research process, as the research itself evolved, began to resonate with Barbara Freeman's idea of the *feminine sublime* (1995), which I return to in *anecdota number six, Anchorhold.*

Ben Highmore, in Chapter 5 of *Analysing Culture* (2006:117-147) refers to de Certeau's treatment of literature, narratives and voices. For de Certeau, a pedestrian develops a kinaesthetic understanding of the city, engrained in the remembering body, that resists the normative meanings assigned to those places by cartographers and city planners, so that space becomes 'practiced place' (1984 :117). In this context, narrative structures regulate space, interlaced or linear, and stories create a kind of mass transportation – *metaphorai* – in which every story is a kind of travel story (115).

De Certeau distinguishes between space (espace) and place (lieu) so that place is an "instantaneous configuration of positions….an indication of stability" (117) whereas space is defined by the dynamic variables of time, direction and velocity. In this way, a geometrically defined area of the city (place) is turned into a space by the people who walk through it. The act of reading also makes space out of the place of written text (or a system of signs). So stories are always transforming spaces into places or places into spaces – organising the play of the changing relationships between them. Inert objects, for example, emerge from their places to become active in the space of the narrative (118). Tours are orally transmitted narratives about a place, what you will see, whereas maps are functional, what you have to do to arrive a certain place. Early maps conflated the two – describing the route and the experience of taking it, both received wisdom and direct observation (121). Crucially then, for my research, in the wider context of the Glasney site, and in the specific context of the sites in which the creative outcomes of my research are presented, de Certeau insists that where stories disappear, space is diminished.

My research reinforced a love, already naturalised or *hefted* in me, for the potent instability of storied spaces, trembling on the cusp of recollection and forgetting. Beyond Glasney field, in the wider context of cultures located in Cornwall, interesting narratives are attached to other vulnerable, contested sites, such as the area in mid-Cornwall known as *Clay Country*. In 2016, Robyn Raxworthy presented a paper at the University of Exeter's symposium on *transgression* in which she described the problems inherent in documenting the history of an industry that has so polarised local opinion. It struck me that the open cast mining that produced the spoils of the china clay industry with its otherworldly white mounds like artificial mountains, leaves no underground structure that is the permanent trace of industrial activity associated with mineral mining.

And what about the desire to discover my own research vernacular, to depart from research conventions that had seemed to me to be patriarchal and constraining?

In a sense was this not a protest against established academic norms, from which, as an artist and particularly as a female artist, I felt as disenfranchised and voiceless as any anti-elitist protest voter. So was this strategy not also a risk – the risk of being too emotional, too subjective to be trustworthy, interesting or valuable?

As a *wrecker*, if nothing else, I want this writing to be evidence of resistence, of a refusal to be drawn towards a final edit, that the thesis marks only a hiatus or pause in a life-long search along the strandline for something unbidden, something fitting, something that will do

The fragile material essence of china clay is unable to be memorialized like granite. The residue has instead to be preserved through endless discourse and localized debate about its significance for the communities associated with it. Without these stories *Clay Country* is diminished metaphorically and perhaps ultimately, literally, if the clay heaps are not cherished.

Highmore also considers what it means to analyse cultural events via an *interdisciplinary* strategy, which might involve, for example, elements of psychoanalysis, history and social theory. Although de Certeau draws on elements of various disciplines in his writing to present new ideas about everyday practices, Highmore argues that interdisciplinary is inadequate as a descriptor for this process. Instead, for Highmore, the various disciplines are employed methodologically by de Certeau to congregate and 'bend towards their other…and in doing so become fundamentally transformed' (Highmore 119). This is partly made possible by elements that are shared, but also due to 'secret similarities that set these discourses off in new directions' (119). The *secret similarity* between apparently different disciplines resides in the recognition of them as all as a form of literature.

Importantly, again in the context of my own research inquiry, for Highmore, in de Certeau's writing, literature turns out to be a form of meta-historiography – the fiction that allows the logical discourse of history to be thought (120). The novel for example – as it investigates the relationships between past, present and future events, positions remembering and forgetting as social and cultural activities and becomes a kind of meta-history, more authentic and reliable than historiography's claims to the objective *truth*. Literature refuses disciplinary specialism, representing what is possible when the specialisms of inter-disciplinarity are overcome, as it 'de-rails and re-rails the business of historiography and psycho-analysis' (121). Highmore points out that this is, of necessity for de Certeau, a violent, disruptive process and only out of this violence could new systems of knowledge emerge. For example, writers of art criticism, post-1980, (Derrida, Barthes) began to express their ideas in a new hybrid form, a multi-vocal style that relied on a 'sense of writing moving by digression and drift as much as by seamless argument..' (121) and interrupted the traditional, academic, singular voice that had dominated art writing before them.

My own research as artist-scholar also acquired this sense of drift and digression, where I began to feel trangressively like a wrecker in my research community. This is an idea I discuss more fully in *anecdota number nine: wreccum maris.*

At the foundations of culture is the messy actuality of competing voices, a *heteroglossia* , a Bakhtian term for 'the multitude of voices that represents the dynamic and constantly changing social world, voices that spiral out, undercutting any attempt to unify culture…a centrifugal force..' (122). According to Highmore, De Certeau recognises the chorus of this polyphonic world but is cautious about how possible it is to access it, as any form of study would seem to have to contain, control or manage it and thus could only define it artificially, and deny its radical plurality (123).

For both Bahktin and de Certeau then, the voice is supremely important in any academic investigation of culture, and the most effective place to allow this voice, 'the descant of the heteroglossia'(124), to be heard is within the extra-disciplinary novel, where, in its discursive form, competing languages can be orchestrated in sympathy with the unbinding influence of the heteroglossia. The novel, and here de Certeau was particularly referring to the 19th century realist novel, becomes 'populated with everyday virtuosities that science does not know what to do with' to make 'a vivid archive' for the everyday (de Certeau cited in Highmore:125).

Reading this chapter was particularly affirming for me as it seemed to make the polyvocal and the visually doubled form of the exegesis which structures my own image/ text work, more secure and legitimate as a (potentially) rich, nuanced vehicle for cultural enquiry.

methera

sethera

But my chorographic poetics of uncertainty also includes objects, animations, sound files and the residue of performative encounters with people and places. It was at this point that, instead of thinking about my research as problematically inter-disciplinary, I started to think about it as something that refused specialisms to become a super-disciplinary. I began to consider this poetics, this collection of micro-narratives or *anecdotae*, as anti-archive or maybe as an oxymoronic archive of hybridities. To allow audiences to be active in the life of these micro-narratives, I attempted to follow the principles of Calum Storrie's delirious museum (2006), Frank den Oudsten's and Highmore's strategies to de-rail and re-rail conventional historiographies, to rupture patriarchal hierarchies typically present in conventionally organised knowledge systems such as databases and other modes of presentation.

Storrie's notion of the delirious museum is an unorthodox, seamless integration of the city museum with the urban street on which it stands. It informs my strategy to integrate the physical environment of a provincial town, in a rural setting, with narratives of its past. In this research I shift the traditional notion of collection and container so that Penryn functions as the site for an invisible, alternative museum, or container, while a series of creative interventions aggregate to become a collection, a chorographic survey expressed here as a *poetics of uncertainty*. These interventions coalesce around Trevisa, and the site of Glasney, which, as the research evolved rippled out into a kind of Glasney/ Trevisa diaspora to encompass adjacent parishes and touch other places further afield via an interconnected web of plausibilities.

Frank den Oudsten's concept of the exhibition as post-spectacular stage (2013) is particularly useful in the context of this research. For den Oudsten, the exhibition is a complex narrative space that needs to be reimagined as a theatre set, requiring collaborative interventions from a team of individuals with different areas of expertise. This collaboration would challenge and disrupt some of the latent antagonisms between content and form, curator and designer. Although den Oudsten is specifically addressing the dynamics of exhibition making, I found it useful to think of my work framed and presented in a gallery that functions like a theatrical set, or stage. Here the work emerges as the residue, product or material trace of performative activity.

The performative activity that underpins the chorographic archive, in my own case, took place in and outside of the gallery. In *Open Spaces and Dwelling Places: Being at Home on Farms in the Scottish Borders* (1999) considers how sheep farmers in the English/Scottish borders invest the marginal land, the hills and fells that their animals graze, with significance through sensuous, transformative activity, driven by the rhythm of shepherding, and the lived spatiality that develops an attachment to the hills which come to signify 'home' (225). This study, whilst geographically removed from the site under investigation in my own research inquiry, had a resonance with me, not only because of the usefulness of its discussion on relationships between walking, place attachment and place responsive vernaculars, but also because of my own emotional connections with the English/Scottish borders through my maternal family that suffuse my own practice. In attempting to locate Trevisa in the context of Cornish culture I was also aware that I was trying to find a place for myself.

pimp

lethera

Gray, influenced by de Certeau and his notion of constitutive walking (de Certeau 1984) is curious about how vernacular meanings are created about localities by speakers, in the way that individuals, familiar with a particular place, create a locality of familiar heres and theres.

This particular geographic region has an additional, historic identity shaped by association with the Border Reivers - fierce bands of feudal mercenaries who raided the lands of rival lairds on both sides of the English/Scottish borders throughout the 14th-16th centuries, a time that includes the period that Trevisa lived through. The fluidity of borders then, porous and uncertain, necessitating, in order to survive, re-invented personae, allegiances and identities, mirrors the Trevisa project and its creative evolution. Skirmishes, strongholds, theft and husbandry are analogous activities within the research which, in spite of an initial attempt to be objective and neutral became inescapably clannish and contested, particularly in the context of the resurgence of the Cornish language. As an artist sensitive to site-responsive text, to place-names and dialect, I was particularly affected by this and felt impelled to discover as much as I could about its history. As this research progressed, the project threatened to become as much about legitimacy, about 'othering' and feeling 'othered', about a conflicted permission to speak as a cultural outsider born in Cornwall, and my right to speak as a creative individual, than about what I actually had to say. This is something that I describe in *anecdota number four: commun*. Eventually though, the hybrid artefacts that I constructed, with their intrinsic ambiguity, began to occupy a performative, dialogic zone, or territory, that I hoped would reside in the mind of the audience, in a kind of third place.

This co-constructed, liminal place helped me to celebrate my own hybridity. It helped me to resist the binary politics of the Cornish debate that although, intuitively, I felt was partial, insufficiently compelling and sometimes inaccurate, was nevertheless unignorable and passionately upheld by its supporters.

During my research into this debate I discovered (Rollison 2010) that the estimated population size for Cornwall in Trevisa's lifetime, from poll tax returns and other administrative detail, suggests that there were about 55,000 individuals or 1/10th its current value which is a figure roughly equivalent to the combined contemporary populations of Truro, Falmouth and Penryn. Decimated by plague, Penryn in the 14th century had a population of approximately 500 people, of which approximately half were Breton migrant workers. So the number of Cornish people in the entire parish was then roughly equivalent to the number of pupils currently attending Penryn Primary School. Mark Stoyle (2002) describes how the labour shortage in the quarries and mining throughout the region was acute and many Breton people, who shared a common Brythonic language, came over to Cornwall in search of work. If this was the case, writing the *Ordinalia* in Cornish would ensure that the play could be devised, performed, witnessed and more readily understood as an inclusive activity by all the inhabitants in the community. But it is only possible to estimate just how many of these and other people resident in Cornwall during that period were monolingual Cornish speakers. According to Stoyle, the Cornish language was then slowly retreating from the Tamar, but this may have been too slow for the majority to notice and does not appear to have caused any real concern.

hovera

dovera

For David Rollison (2010) the linguistic divide that was most contentious was horizontal, rather than vertical. In other words, the radical and reformist thinkers of the day, including Trevisa, were not so much worried by Cornwall's west/east separation from England, but by the economic, social and spiritual separation between the ordinary, labouring man and woman, known at that time as the peasantry, from the people wielding power over their lives. In Cornwall the power brokers included the local Cornish gentry and the Church. It was these people in Cornwall and others like them elsewhere who not only had the wealth but also the education to read and interpret texts including laws, statutes, the Bible and the book of Common Prayer, that were all written in Latin. Access to these texts gave them the power to oppress the common majority who laboured in the fields, the length and breadth of the land.

But H. Paul Manning considers the *Ordinalia* in the context of spatial poetics, underwritten by the conservative pragmatics of *largesse* (2003) or the bestowal of gifts from those with higher status to the lower or less powerful. In this model, the relationship of Lord to servant mirrors the divine relationship between God and humanity, which justifies medieval feudalism. Trevisa's paratext to his translation of the *Polychronicon, a Dialogue between a Lord and a Clerk*, which I discuss in *anecdota number three: fallen language*, is another expression of *largesse*. Manning analyses the plays triadic structure which is performed in three parts, over three days, but which, less obviously, has a threefold structure of gift-giving in which villains and heroes are strategically rewarded with tracts of land.

The good characters receive land that borders Penryn and its immediate locality, the villains are given land from more distant parishes, which is a device calculated brilliantly to appeal to the prejudices of a local audience and to make the doctrine of the play-cycle immediate, visceral and contemporary. The hierarchical bestowal of gifts from powerful landed gentry, represented by kings in the play for example, preserves rather than subverts the medieval social order. The decision to devise a Cornish drama could then itself be considered within this context as another example of *largesse*, of gift-giving from the linguistic virtuosity at the intellectual centre of Glasney College, to the ordinary member of the *commun*.

At the time that the *Ordinalia* was composed, most probably at Glasney, the Black Death had increased the value and status of the common majority. For the first time labour was in short supply. But the times were about to change and writing texts in English, rather than in Latin or Norman French, supported by writers such as Trevisa and Chaucer, ensured that ordinary people could understand key political debates that would, eventually, fuel a social revolution.

The ethnography of locality is defined by how people think of themselves as being different from other people. However, according to Gray, 'locality and place tend to be treated as passive settings for a relational matrix among people' (226) with little attention paid to the idea of a *sense of place* as a significant component in a definition of difference. In my original attempts to assess what the site of Glasney College, as a resonant place, might mean to the people in its vicinity, the results were equally ambiguous with some local residents not really sure where the site was or what used to stand there.

dick

Gray builds on the analogy between walking and language originally described by de Certeau, where city *places* are pinned down in text used by cartographers who read them from a distance with a *totalising eye* (226), so that from this perspective the landscape becomes text. The static and structured language of the official map-maker and city planner is disrupted by the improvised bodily movements of the pedestrian – accruing layers of diverse meanings in the process – so that, according to de Certeau

> 'It is true that the operation of walking can be traced on city maps in such a way as to describe their paths (here well-trodden, there very faint) and their trajectories (going this way and not that). But these thick or thin curves only refer, like words, to the absence of what has passed by…' (1984: 97)

Gray favours de Certeau's method of practice, in which space is defined by doing, and so identifies *wildness* as the principle feature of the border hills, a wildness that makes the stock that grazes there insufficiently biddable for sheep dog trials and one which provides 'dense topographical formations that can be used as a system of spatial differentiation' (231). The hills are defined as *outbye* in contrast to the *inbye* that are the gentler pastures closer to the farm. The movement of the sheep collectively in the area defined as a hirsel, or area of land sufficient to support a flock, mediates the relationship of the shepherd with the land , as they walk a route that allows them to visit all the flock in one continuous circuit. Typically this is between six and ten miles and covered over several hours of 'going round the hill' (232). Hirsels are subdivided into smaller areas called cuts and typify Heidegger's idea of *dwelling* (1971) in which meaningful places are joined in one surrounding world or *um-welt*. As the shepherd walks around the hill, small events are noted and recalled, belonging to the topological features along the way, so that the hill becomes a haptic aide memoire or touchstone, attaching the shepherd to the hirsel sentimentally through narrative, and conflating the physical dimension with a knowledge dimension. Frequent seeing and handling deepens this connection - one of the principle skills a shepherd from this region needed was to be a good *kenner* – a word that means to know and to understand, at once recognition and remembrance.

The word *hirsel* refers to an individual flock but also refers to the area of hill defined by the flock as it grazes, so the word carries twin, symbiotic meanings, embodied in the animal. The paths that allow the shepherd to access the sheep come into being through the habits of the flock – hill sheep, for example, typically will spend the night on the summit of a hill and crop the grass down to the lower levels the next day, moving back up from lower to higher ground in the late afternoon.
The sheep develop, as they range this land, their own spatial knowledge and they remain habitually faithful to it – mating, lambing and sheltering in the same places throughout their lives. The Border vernacular for encouraging this habit in the beasts – to make it easier for a shepherd to tend them - is called *hefting on*, and the word for the area of the farm's hill that a particular group of sheep is attached to, is a heft, or cut – 'unifying sheep and space with the practice of using the land.... in this way individual cuts form building blocks for the organisation of the labour on the farm' (234).

I read Gray's chapter with interest because it was the first piece of research I had encountered that contextualised a reading of de Certeau within a pastoral/rural landscape rather than urban cityscape. The writer is a geographer working ethnographically, in the field (literally), over the course of several weeks spent in the company of shepherds tending flocks of sheep on the English/Scottish borders. This borderland resonates with my own practise, which is often located on thresholds or in liminal territory. I am also drawn to the notion of absence, to de Certeau's *absence of what has passed by*. I recalled the ghost-trails and tracks that had featured in a previous *image/textwork TRIG* that had been formed by hundreds of visitors walking Orley Common in Devon and by, in my speculative imagination, the Victorian explorer William Wills as he played on the common as a child. But lines scored into the body of the fell, by the rhythms of the heft in Gray's study, also resonate with the lines in the *shadow/hide* structure and with the motion-captured trace of my own remembering body in the *anchorhold* micro-narrative that I discuss in more detail in anecdotae numbers seven and six.

inbye – the parishes that supported Glasney – lands gifted as rewards to good characters in the text of the Ordinalia

outbye – beyond the parishes that supported Glasney – fair game – lands gifted to reward the activity of evil characters in the Ordinalia

hirsel – the imaginative diaspora of the Trevisa Project - an um-welt of meaningful places

kenner – the knowing, the kindred spirit

kenon – a state of not-knowing

But where is the dialect of this new topos, the intimate warmth of blood affiliation, the peculiar homecoming of the hefted that welcomes the initiate and excludes the outsider? This is a sensation familiar to anyone who has been invited to spend Christmas, for the first time, in someone else's home, in spite of the best efforts of the host to be inclusive. It appeared to me that this new topos, this hinterland with its invisible umbillici anchoring the virtual to the real, required its own vernacular, its own mythologies.

Overhearing conversational exchanges between family groups of visitors to Cornwall I noticed that newly formed attachments to particular places are sometimes expressed imperfectly – mispronounced place names, for example, or poorly understood behaviours of the tide or local custom. As a tourist, you are by definition not of the place you are visiting, but are tolerated because you bring with you the opportunity for some kind of economic transaction.

If to *ken*, in the vernacular of the English/Scottish borders, is to *know* or *understand*, before Plato the word *kenon* referred to a void or state of not-knowing. This not-knowing is important in the Trevisa Project as a site of uncertainty between fiction's deliberate imaginative invention and history's claim to truth. The chorographic survey of the site of Glasney College and the figure of John Trevisa in this research involves an inter- or super-disciplinary series of strategies in real and virtual worlds.
Since Plato's *Timaeus*, the *chora* has been variously interpreted as a matrix of beginnings, emplaced invention or as an analogue for a genesis story. 20th century theorists, including Derrida and Ulmer, have articulated the relevance of the *chora* to non-linear ways of organising information, which today are often expressed using hypertext to create potentially limitless databases for ideas, such as Wikipedia.

Recently, Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks (2001) have referred to the *chora* as a more authentic, nuanced archive of the ephemeral essence of performance and contextualised archaeological data than can be expressed using traditional documentation strategies. Their notion of *chora* is most relevant to my research and includes cross-disciplinary discourses about spirit of place, autobiography, cultural history and objective topological analysis to create an emerging hybrid that departs from discrete, atomised disciplinary fields.

Rickert (2007) describes the mind as an emotional and rational agent that now deals with both technologically driven social spaces and physical spaces, transforming the world of ideas via a new rhetoric that is emerging to deal with digital phenomena. For Rickert, there is a new spatial paradigm in which the mind is both embodied and dispersed into the environment itself – this is a new kind of *topos* – less and less in the head - more externalized in non-biological zones such as networks, environments and databases where ideas flourish and are discussed. This resonates with Brockmeier's idea of memory as something which is socially constructed, spilling out beyond the confines of the individual mind. Brockmeier's term for this is the *memory episteme* 'which binds all ideas, concepts and metaphors of remembering into a historical framework…[to include].. literature and the arts, as well as everyday practices of autobiographical self-resolution and self-writing' (2015: 76).

Because *chora* pre-dates topos it also carries with it connotations of land, city, region and ground (Rickert 2007: 254). In the Iliad, for example, the words *choros/choron* extend and reinforce the idea of the chora as a place of invention because they refer simultaneously to the dance and the dancing-floor, a place for dancing and the activity, as holistic synthesis, fashioned by Daedalus. This idea resonates with Yeats' *how can we know the dancer from the dance?* in *Among Schoolchildren* (1926) and with the *hirsel* which is at once the flock and its grazing place.

I consoled myself with the thought that perhaps the artist is tolerated because they have at least attempted to make a serious enough commitment to a place that is not at its heart about commercial exchange, but is a kind of translation from one set of vernaculars to another, a kind of gift

Cumbric was spoken in Cumbria before the 12th century.
There is a ghost of this counting score in a memory of skipping rhymes in the playground of my infancy and of my older female relatives organising stitches along the length of a knitting needle. In Keswick, it is still used when counting sheep

yan tyan tethera methera pimp sethera lethera hovera dovera dick

To discover that Cumbric was, like Cornish, a Brythonic language, was a revelation to me

My sense of self which sometimes feels insubstantial and fragmentary, regrouped and felt more coherent for a while

dick dovera hovera lethera sethera pimp methera tethera tyan yan

counting backwards, nostalgically, to the origin, to the source,

at the moment of being in the world

and, before that, to not-being, to the not-known, to the kenon

It also connects, importantly for this research, with Derrida's (1995) description of *arkhe*, at the root of the word *archivewhich* carries symbiotic meanings of authority or command, with the word for powerhouse or the dwelling place of the magistrate, who oversaw not only the safe-keeping, but also the interpretation of the legal documents that were stored there. So the principle that this research attempts to resist is that of archive as enactment of authority.

Archaeological evidence suggests that the situated activity of the inhabitants of an Ancient Greek city, between strategically placed sanctuaries (urban, sub-urban and extra-urban) wove the idea of the city or polis, just as dancers wove the dance-floor with their dance so the rhetoric of places emerged through performative activity. For Plato, the idea of activity is crucial to the idea of chora in the *Timaeus*. The polis/city is not static, but is constantly shifting at its edges. Its unstable boundary is defined by activity beyond its borders, choric activity at the interface, expressed as a matrix or crucible, the mother of all becoming. The consequential instability of the bounded city began to resonate with the parameters of my own practice that was always porous, always shifting, and always liable to be shifted, by new discoveries, random encounters and pieces of flotsam blown in by a storm. My practiced playing-place, or personal *plen-an-gwarry* came in to being through iterative performances, prompted by these discoveries.

But Plato's *chora* is ambiguous. It gives rise to invention but has no characteristic of its own. Being neither matter nor ideal form it is an uncertain, strangely displaced place and this is crucial for my own attempt to articulate a poetics of uncertainty. Rickert also recounts how, for Plato, before any conversation or discourse can begin, or go forward, it is necessary to go back. This raises the issue of memory; in other words, a beginning can only proceed from a recollection of the past, which complicates the notion of a *founding moment* (257). The integration of a beginning with memory creates not a singular but a multiplicity or matrix of beginnings. According to Rickert, Derrida revisits this notion of multiple beginnings when he writes that a beginning is just an idea materialized in rhetorical space, a writerly principle. For Plato, it is memory that can invest the arid intellectual ideal city, which is a city of the head, with *eros*, with desire, procreation, sexual difference, with life. These ideas are crucial to the idea of choric creativity in the context of my own research; where memories, or sensuous traces of the past, expressed as anecdotae, give ideas a life beyond the intellectual, to be embodied and thus also experienced by the senses.

While *chora*, for Rickert, may be a non-place, Plato's choric creativity seems to frame a gap between known and not known, between matter and void, between place and memory, between the cosmos and how we come to know it – to express the movement between an idea and its moment, or moments of becoming.

the dream logic of surrealism – something that is invented out of the process of invention

Errance – the desire to be willingly led astray – to surrender all responsibility for one's own life

VAL DIGGLE: A POETICS OF UNCERTAINTY

For Greg Ulmer (1994) the idea of *chora* can be loosely reinvented to support new ways of organising digitally enabled networks of communication that are structurally different to those that emerged from print culture which tended to be linear and hierarchical. For Ulmer, such networks are self-reflexive. He talks of *hypermedia* – a gathering together of images, texts and sounds to provide a network or pattern across forms to create an argument less concerned with logic and more concerned with memory and intuition. Hypermedia create an *information environment* or cloud through which the user will navigate by choosing a path from sets of dispersed data, reinventing the notion of place as something that is singular. This has for Ulmer the dream logic of surrealism – something that is invented out of the process of invention. In my practice-based research, I attempt to use hypermedia to articulate a chora – my poetics of uncertainty - about an exploded building and a largely forgotten figure, driven by my self-reflexive curiosity about creative process which often took on a surreal or ludic quality.

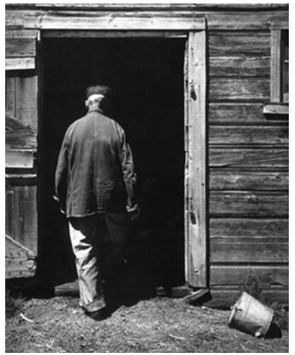


Fig. 2 MORRIS, Wright. 1968.
From *The Home Place.*

Ulmer believes that the most productive way to explore an issue is via immersion in an event, rather than a theory.
'A principle of choral research [is] to collect what I find into a set, unified by a pattern of repetitions, rather than by a concept. Electronic learning is more like discovery than proof…' (1994:56).
This system redefines the relationship between chora and topos as an inter-discursive site where discourses can be conducted, and is a compelling strategy for my own research project, a significant part of which has been conducted on-line and coalesces via links that produce serendipitous and tenuous discoveries, or findings.
This resonates with the performative nature of *wrecking*, gleaning or gathering sea-harvest on the *shoreline*.

03-01-2016

Chorography historically referred to systems, such as pictorial maps which conflated subjective narrative with topological information. These chorographic systems reached a peak of complexity in the 19th century with the construction of panoramas – immersive environments that usually depicted topologically accurate scenes of dramatic political and/or cultural significance, in the round. Audiences entered the panorama site via a tunnel to a raised viewing platform in the centre of a space, screened from overhead distraction by a canopy, to view a narrative described by a 360 degree city or landscape – a void at the centre – chorographic information (being) at the circumference.

The Trevisa Project, by considering the site of Glasney College as the centre of a chorographic panorama, a virtual *plen-an-gwarry*, playing place or container for a collection of museological fictions, expresses relationships between location and identity, dispersal and coalescence, absence and presence, being and void. Ulmer's *chora* is also a system for considering patterns across places, and the relationship between the visible 'imaged' qualities of a place with the invisible or metaphysical which prompted me to consider what a collection of museological fictions might look like, inside and outside the realm of virtual spaces.

The idea of ekphrasis, both ancient and contemporary, is a rhetorical term or a means of negotiating a way between the verbal and the visual. The photo-text work of Wright Morris (1910-1998) intrigues me because sparsely, understated photographic images which seemed to be documenting the rigours faced by Nebraskan farming communities, as though to stir the social conscience of the viewer, like the photographic work of Dorothea Lange, are juxtaposed instead with fictional narratives. These narratives do not require pity, but celebrate the ordinary lives of people struggling to eke out a living from the vast, horizontal landscapes of mid-Western America and are a testament to the affection that Morris felt for the people and the place.

Fig. 3 MORRIS, Wright. 1968. From The Home Place. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press

Usually the pared down domestic interiors, shabby townships and desiccated fields that he describes visually are devoid of people. But this image is unusual. An elderly man, seen from behind, steps out of the sunshine into the dark interior of a wooden building, next to an overturned bucket, caught exactly on the threshold. It could be a metaphor for someone reaching the end of life, but if so, it is a death approached with equanimity. The eloquence of this retreating figure, particularly the exposed nape of the neck, expresses a kind of vulnerability, a pathos that moves me, and is a motif that I incorporate into a series of gouache portraits of Jools the Solitary.

Price (1998) claims that the work of Wright Morris, particularly his photo-text work, is more than an innovative structural hybrid of words and visual imagery, but is also a hybrid in terms of genre, an idea that found resonance when I reflected on my own practice. Morris himself wrote an essay entitled *The Romantic Realist* (1989) in which he expresses his puzzlement at being labelled a romantic by a journalist who had interviewed him, but Price thinks that Morris can best be understood by considering his work as a kind of American Gothic. The American Gothic manifests itself through the haunted quality of the abandoned interiors, decaying buildings, a nostalgia for the past but most importantly through a belief in the transformative power of the imagination that can manifest itself as a dark fascination with "death… pleasurable longing…. and that fine madness that gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name" (Wright Morris 1989: 31).

03.01.2016

a residue of performance in the *kenon* between my mother's death, on Christmas Day 2015, and her funeral, 03.01.2016 would have been her 82nd birthday

A taut, documentary style of photography, that does not obviously appear to be embellished or fictionalized, is combined with text that is emotionally affective. In this way, Morris constructs a multivalent set of polarities that oscillate between the unglamorous reality of the flat-lands of Nebraska, and another world, richer and full of emotional potential. This theme has been elaborated by Wayne Booth (cited in Price 1998) who considers that the only way to endure the bitter hardships of the everyday, illustrated through Morris's photography, is to escape to another world, through heroism, love or through the transformative power of the imagination, described in Morris's text. Commenting on his own practice Wright Morris remarks:

> Life, raw life, the kind we lead every day, has the curious property of not seeming real enough. We have a need, however illusive, for a life that is more real than life. It lies in the imagination. Fiction would seem to be the way that it is processed into reality (1989: 228-229).

near the boat builder's house – overheard in Penryn

Those woodmen ..... for the Rose of Argyll – knew the eucaplyt – an opportunistic tree. If you build your house on an escarpment you're asking for trouble... clinker... also on a floodplain – you'd think the clue would be in the name. The Red Gum used to be used for paddle-steamers on the Murray River. It's a beautiful wood –
I built a staircase out of it – so resistant to rot – I saw it used in a children's playground – no rot at all after 60 years

Can't say the same for humans.

Barges from the last century can just be launched – a wavy grain – lovely – a thing of beauty – cuts like cheese. But now it's forbidden to take them down – but God – it's lovely timber

(I'm surprised she has not got one ear bigger than the other, listening to other people's problems)

There's too much to do and places to go now at my time of life

Can't commit to a long term project like that. It's the beauty of youth – to be able to commit to a project like that, but they'll be forty before they finish

Though the wreck is an historical thing – that's just how boats end their life

I guess the next project I take on will be to build a house for Jess. The jobs/ logging/boat-building - I'd live in Brittany but you would get lonely. You need to be on the coast where there's some kind of structure

He collects rubbish and if he doesn't collect it – he creates it. He'll buy a tractor and two years later they'll be bits hanging off it. He's just rumbled through life. They had money, servants, but he went through their fortune

She was the first woman commercial diver – very capable

But they are all like that

Strange creatures of chaos

Price re-considers polarities in terms associated with the idea of the Gothic, namely limit and transgression, which are "contrary concepts frequently associated with the violation of the boundaries of reality and possibility" (130). Crossing over the boundaries of what is conventionally held to be acceptable, re-frames old rules, established norms and codes of behaviour to identify and transform commonly accepted limits. New boundaries are restored through the dynamic interplay between dualistic concepts such as light/ dark, good/evil and reason/irrationality. For Price, this concept is most clearly articulated spatially, in the photographs, which then fuse with the text to 'examine important American cultural anxieties and fears' (130) polarizing its schizoid soul – the dream and the nightmare.

fig. 4 MORRIS, Wright. 1968. From *The Home Place.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press

Glasney College was built in the Gothic style of architecture attributed to Abbot Suger (c1081-1151) who, interestingly, describes the sensation of being inside a Gothic building as transporting him to 'some strange region of the universe', a kind of third place (cited in VAM 2016), that occurs

> When … the loveliness of the many-coloured gems has called me away from external cares … then it seems to me that I see myself dwelling, as it were, in some strange region of the universe which neither exists entirely in the slime of the earth nor entirely in the purity of Heaven

The culture of Cornwall could be characterised as a manifestation of a doubled or even schizophrenic desire to be part of and yet distinct from wider contemporary discourse. Creative practitioners are drawn to the peninsula and its peaceful isolation, but then risk being siloed in remoter parts of the Duchy where it is often a struggle to place work in the public domain and to integrate with a supportive network of mentors, peers and advocates. Not far inland from popular tourist resorts are swathes of bleak moorland, abandoned mine workings and some of the most economically disadvantaged communities in the UK. There are echoes of this rural deprivation in Morris' work. The dilapidation of the farms and townships and the bleak interiors that he uses to illustrate his texts are combined with rich prose, which provides the reader with an privileged alternative view of the interior life of the characters who inhabit such spaces, so neither extreme becomes unbearable, nor commonplace.

These oscillating polarities, a feature of what might currently belong to the metamodern, provide a discourse on the impossibility of authenticity, on what can be considered to be real. The *Trevisa Project* has elements that simultaneously refer to the original Gothic impulse and to the kind of Gothic literature popularised by writers of fiction in the nineteenth century. The Gothic sensibility assumes that what is normally claimed to be reality is just part of an

> 'expanded domain that also includes the irrational, the primitive and the supernatural…[that]…helps alert the mind to the notion that what is commonly thought of as real by society and language is merely a smaller portion of a larger reality that can only be apprehended through expanded consciousness, heightened perception and refined sensitivity' (Price 1989:131).

For Price, the photograph of Uncle Harry stepping over the threshold is an image of transgressive boundary crossing from one world into another. The inside/outside spatial model is a common device in Gothic literature, used as a metaphor for the psychological, interior life of characters. Empty, abandoned rooms, locked doors and forbidden chambers all signify transgressive territory where some crime or tragedy has taken place. Price considers the worn-out structures that Morris features in his photo-texts to be markers that signify lost dreams, failed hopes, isolation and despair, offering 'veiled glimpses… of the "indweller"' (135). Inevitably it is the task of the protagonist to identify, and then break through, a barrier that has previously separated one character from something that is essential, something that will allow them to function as a complete individual. This resonates with the idea of liminal or trangressive territory, accessed by encounters with blocked doorways that become portals to other ways of being, in my own work.

Equally importantly for my research, time is not linear in Morris's work. Price describes how time past and time present are intertwined and distorted – another feature of the Gothic. He offers a close reading of *Reflection in Oval Mirror*, *Home Place*, 1947, to illustrate this, where generations of family photographs, grouped adjacent to a door that has been removed from its hinges, initially suggest that the photographer has symbolically has been granted privileged access to the past. This is ironically, however, disrupted by the reversal of the image in the mirror that implies that the secrets of that family are unreachable and impossible to narrate truthfully, without distortion. The literal distortion in the reflection can be seen in the waviness of the reflected door panels. Here the homely has been transformed into the *unheimlich*, untouchable and frozen.

The term *romantic realism* appears to be an oxymoron. Like creative *non-fiction* it is initially hard to see how a single piece of work could of itself address terms that appear to be mutually exclusive or contradictory. Originally applied to 19th-century literature, the novels of Dostoevsky and Dickens were commonly described as the work of *romantic realists*, but today it is a term frequently applied to popular TV shows, especially soap-operas, where a narrative, ostensibly set in ordinary 'reality', catalogues a series of dramatic events that befall a few central characters with untypical frequency and heightened emotional significance, to provide an escapist form of mass entertainment.

At the church of St Breage, not far from Penryn, there is a fragment of a medieval wall painting depicting things that were forbidden on the Sabbath, including gambling, which is represented here by a playing card - the five of diamonds.

But for the purposes of this research, the photo-text work of Wright Morris embodies a more resonant form of *romantic realism*. Morris juxtaposes a photographic image alongside a text-based narrative and the pairing has, at first glance, little in common.

With the image of the wall painting at St Breage in mind, I began to construct a set of playing cards in which key theorists for this research were featured.. Jacques Derrida, Janet Cardiff and Walter Benjamin are respectively the Jack, Queen and King of Hearts.

I managed to track down Greg Ulmer and emailed a request to feature him in the pack.

What playing card would he like to be? I asked.

To my surprise his response was speedy

The King of Clubs, he said

The text and the image seem to occupy opposite, neutral or conflicting domains, rather than functioning, as they might in a conventional photo-document, as illustrations that work mutually to reinforce a shared meaning or set of meanings. Instead, Morris's photo-texts collide to create, in the mind of the reader, a third place, uniquely informed by personal histories, memories and imaginations.

In this new territory (because it does feel as though the third 'place' has a spatial quality) Morris is able to offer a fusion of what it is to observe with what it is to inhabit, and it is the outcome of this kind of collision (of observer with inhabitant) that I document in the *Trevisa Project*, most notably in the *Hide for Shadows* that emerged during the Newlyn residency (2013).

The photo-text work of Wright Morris with its haunted depopulated images of ruined townships and abandoned buildings is accompanied by the voices of the characters. Each oscillates between apparently contradictory domains, to re-invest the other with new meanings and sets of associations (intertextual/ intermedial/interdiscursive). The characters seem to have only recently departed. It is this doubling that intrigues me - the way in which the combination of the image and the voice operates as a kind of portal to the imagination.

Although, in *The Inhabitants* the photographic image is placed to the right of each double-page spread, Morris describes, in the introduction how he created a photographic archive before he wrote the text so the image scaffolds the architecture of the writing, which only subsequently acquired a sense of locale.

The told tale of the child who remarks that they prefer stories told on the radio to stories on TV because the radio has better pictures, is relevant to a reading of Morris's work. His photographs however, do not appear as though they were taken by a magic camera that has captured the way the text has been visualised by the reader. Instead, what Morris does, apparently effortlessly, is to reverse this process, creating a voice, or many voices – laconic, shrewd, naïve, unsure, happy, confused – and we hear, through the text, a sound-track for the images, as though the walls concealed microphones that recorded fragments of conversations in their vicinity. We gain no visual information from the text and no direct information about people from the images. But the image and text combine to function filmically, as sets, with the characters talking off-camera.

The flat, open landscape of the plains of Nebraska, with its wide, low horizons, foregrounds attention on the dilapidated buildings that Morris photographs so that they appear abstracted insubstantial, almost two dimensional, like they belong to the set of a Hollywood cowboy town.

Midway through the research, Penryn-as-site felt like my delirious museum, my primary text. I hoped that it might seamlessly integrate through an organic, non-hierarchical process, the container (the place) with the contained (its histories and fictions). For a while Penryn functioned as a container for this collection of irrational, museological fictions to explore the slippery relationship between location and identity, dispersal and coalescence, absence and presence. It was my intention that these oscillating polarities should provide a discourse on authenticity, on what it is to be 'real', while the fragments of the original medieval building, dispersed throughout the vernacular architecture of the town centre, defy the deadly taxonomic categorisation of a conventional museum, resist labels and glib explanation and thus 'avoid the void' (see anecdota number four: the air museum) that Edward Casey (1998) and Michael Shanks (2012) would say occurs when the arid accumulation of fragmentary data fails to capture resonance, or the spirit of a place.

Authenticity began to emerge as a value in my practice as a spectral trace, using motion capture technology, for example, to make animated drawings and texts from gestures created by my body as I describe my creative process. This eventually became the *anchorhold* or *anecdota number six* which I discuss later (see also https://www.loridiggle.com) The fictions contained in the physical site gradually began to spiral out beyond its parameters to engage with virtual spaces and with physical spaces. These were linked tangentally to the original investigation and became my own idealized museum of unlimited growth.

Unlike the photographic work of Cindy Sherman, in which there are constructed references to the visual rhetoric of film, Morris's photography is placed, via the text, in the imagination of the reader so that it functions as a kind of shared memory outside a linear time-frame. Experienced partly as film-clip/snippet of radio drama/ overheard conversation/direct personal observation his images coalesce chimerically and can be experienced, subjectively, as a series of stills that might be from a documentary of one's own life, as well as objectively, as evidence of the life of another character. In the search for fragments from his boyhood, Morris has retrieved a kind of collective biography or tribal memory. This is poly-vocal and place responsive and contrasts with the (univocal) work of Richard Long, who also uses photographic image and text in combination in his work.

Iain Biggs (2005) describes the work of Long as a Romantic response to Nature whilst acknowledging that Long himself considers himself to be a Realist. In his work Long uses images and texts as twin descriptors, offering discrete sets of information such as the rules that Long applied when he walked through a landscape or built a cairn of stones.

The phenomenologist, Dylan Trigg (2013) argues that an individual's sense of who they are, is an aggregation of place memories.

So, if, as Trigg claims, the unsettling phenomenological power of the uncanny is evoked most intensely in ruined sites which manifest an unexpected persistence of a site of trauma, by extension, the reanimated ruins of Glasney College create conflict between different people with different levels of emotional investment in Cornwall's past. By implication, it would appear impossible for anyone to be fully present or to have an intact sense of self, if they identify as Cornish and are emotionally attached to the site of Glasney, or, possibly, what it represents symbolically. The dispersed fragments of a ruin are likely to add another layer of complexity. By choosing to make work that aggregates or reassembles imaginatively these dispersed fragments, as anecdota or micro-narratives, my intention is to create a *third place*, an interactive zone to transform, disrupt or reveal a latent integrity of place, that responds to individual needs, personal fictions, fantasies and histories. The historical figure of Trevisa, through a web of plausabilities, recontextualised by a matrix of micro-narratives, is recalibrated and redrawn.

Paul Carter (1996) invokes a similar interstitial zone when he describes the interconnectedness of theory and practice as a *praxis* that evolves over time, articulated by a 'middle voice' (331). This middle voice is a synthesis of subject and object, each continuously redefining the other, echolaic and reflexive, where 'discontinuous partial selves, or the self as historical process' can be articulated (White cited in Carter 1996:331). In the structure of my own thesis, more traditional academic writing is presented in parallel with subjective descriptions of creative outputs.

It struck me that the Cornish *plen-an-gwarry* is a kind of panoramic site, a panoptic machine for display and spectacle that was capable of producing Storrie's set of covert cultural fictions in a storied space (2007). In the context of the *Ordinalia*, for example, the three sets of dramas performed over a period of three days, with their own internal triadic structures, reinforces the shared values and beliefs of the community involved in their production. This structure appears to contribute to the maintenance of a conservative status quo via ritualized critique of figures of authority. In this way the plays provide a covert mechanism through which a sense of injustice could be vented and defused, where it was possible to speak truth to power without any expectation of social change.

I am intrigued by the possibilities of digital panoramic storied spaces but my own fictions are intended to be overt and disruptive rather than covert and manipulative. Calum Storrie (2007) describes Le Corbusier's unrealised dream of an ever-increasing collection in an ever-expandable space, which resonates with the structure of the panorama. Visitors would enter a tunnel that emerged in the centre of a transcendental spiral and work their way to the perimeter. For Storrie, this idealised museum of unlimited growth is a utopian project that just serves to replace what le Corbusier described as the deceitful 19th century museum with another tragic attempt to flatten history with an impossible rationalism.

In its latent integrity, the intimate potential for a third or middle place resides in its non-linearity. The reader is encouraged to navigate their own pathway between many voices so that their own, sub-vocalised reading of the text is folded, over time, uniquely into the body of the writing. The map of the exegesis, which I feared initially could at best be a poor, static, simulacrum for the practice that shapes the research inquiry, is hopefully instead a more, nuanced and dynamic territory of interaction, in the spirit of the research practice itself.

Paul Carter, in *Sound In-Between: voice, space and performance* (1992) is particularly interested in the playful interactions of sounds encountered during waves of colonisation and migration when speakers of different languages first listened to each other. But he also is interested, like Wright Morris, in scripting voices for built environments, with what he calls the 'dialogical voice – eager to enter into conversation, to carve out a place of its own, a position from which to speak' (160). His extended writing on the sounds of buildings 'their whispering resonances' which subvert architectural rhetoric that is all about buildings as edifices of power and ownership (160), is particularly pertinent to my own research:

'…they are profoundly implicated historically,
but their abstraction, the inner logic of their lines and
proportions, aims to disguise this, to represent them as
metaphysical structures, outside time, outside space.
When, however they are considered as vibrating surfaces and
resonators they align themselves with consciousness and listen
with us to the world.… Buildings speak, hold conversations with
us, behave as an outer ear,. Hotels are like radios: they reproduce
the voice without the body, representing passion metonymically
as the creak of bed-springs. Metalled roads and steep stairways
are alike instruments – played by the tyre and the running foot.
These performances though uncommissioned and unexpected,
spatialise our inner life and express our transports of desire
more intimately, more painfully than almost any music,
for, unlike music, they are irrevocable' (160-161).

In the context of the *Trevisa Project,* the irrevocability of a past associated with a particular, contested space is disrupted by a series of narratives that attempt to articulate relationships between histories and fictions. These fictions are inevitably site-responsive. Ambient sound associated with particular sites, and ideas vocalised and recorded in the field, provide me with sensual material that is resonant with the distilled intimacies of particular places, rather than totalised by abstracted sets of theories about site, communities and located cultures.

The ghost trail that is invisibly inscribed on the hirsel made manifest by motion tracking technologies and by the performative trace of the shadow hide

Throughout this research I began to understand that, once abstracted, Casey's 'middle-realm', the locus of this poetics, might subvert the hierarchies of power, political attachment and other meta-narratives, to become an internalised, intimate exchange between myself as narrator and the 'other' listener or witness of these exchanges, in virtual but crucially also in real environments. Inevitably the project crosses traditional disciplinary fields to combine elements of image and object-making, writing, experimental sound work and performance that are the consequence of a kind of aesthetic provocation that occurs when the site is charted, observed, listened to and recorded. The ambient sounds of the place, snippets of overheard conversations or deliberately recorded interviews serve to provoke my own practice, co-channelling ideas in resonant sites, to release something that is fundamentally ineffable but strives to articulate the kind of porous knowledge that for Yve Lomax permeates time, space and the natural world (2005). In deliberately seeking out subjects that sit on the edge of what can be reliably known through traditional research methods I inhabit a fertile place where, through alternative, performative, methodologies I try to articulate curiosity about what remains and what has disappeared from our collective remembering.

In the work, historical constants in the landscape, and imaginative poetic interventions, aggregate, paradoxically, as imaginative truths and so become new hybrid ways of knowing. These aggregated narratives feel to me more potent than a single, univocal account of a person and their past. Designed to prompt audiences to wonder what to doubt and what to trust, and to discover a series of intimate, mutable connections between the past and their present selves, they become, I hope, as much about what it is to live now as what it was like to live then. What we think we know or have understood in one work is challenged and disrupted by another. In this way the narratives could be considered to occupy an imaginative, interstitial zone that sits outside history, in Storrie's *delirious museum*, by colonising a void between the floors of the curated past.

VAL DIGGLE: A POETICS OF UNCERTAINTY

ANECDOTA NUMBER ONE: *BEAR HOUSE*

Glasney College was, at the peak of its influence, arguably one of the most important seats of learning in Europe – a proto-university. After it was dismantled, post-Reformation in 1558, fragments of the original building were incorporated into the vernacular houses and boundary walls in the centre of Penryn, as local people raided the convenient quarry to which the collapsed building had reverted. Deborah Wingfield who carried out a survey in the 1970s, as part of an emergency archaeological investigation, prior to the building of social housing on the edge of Glasney field, has identified about a dozen of these. In conversation with John Kirby, chair of the local historical museum, he remarked that any fragment of dressed granite that appears amongst the rubble construction of a medieval house or garden wall is likely to be part of the original college building. Wingfield's list (1979) includes two carved heads, one human and one animal, a stone façade engraved with a prayer and a stone plaque inscribed with an image of hunting dog.

1

Early November
– a mild day after rain –
talking with Becalelis and Ruth
while their baby slept in an
upstairs room

We sat in their kitchen,
drinking ginger tea

Becalelis told me that he had once
been a stone carver, but he would
never touch granite

It wasn't the hardness of the stone
that bothered him, but the dust,
the silica and how you would have
to wear a mask

Perhaps surprisingly he had no
real attachment
to buildings made of stone

His ideal house would be made of
wood, or perhaps mud,
some material that would flex and
be adaptable

There was no changing this
stone cottage – it had stood
for centuries, and after living
there for two years they were
going to have to move
to live somewhere else that
could give them more space

Ruth, a dancer and
choreographer, told me that
they had first met in South
America when they were
both, in their different ways,
researching the tango

When they bought this
cottage in St Thomas Street
the person who sold it to
them said that it had been
associated with artists for a
long time and they were glad
that artists would be living
there for a while longer

But it was Becalelis who first
mentioned the bear – who
took the bear seriously

There is an ambiguous divide in the centre of the town between the public street and and the private domestic intimacy of home. Narrow alleyways- or opes – are publically accessible but have a particular aura of uncertainty. Sometimes they are thoroughfares between tightly packed dwellings, leading from a main road to a car park, for example. But sometimes they stop abruptly in a series of private gardens or in a courtyard where you feel compelled to back away and retrace your steps apologetically. There are rumours of other ambiguous thoroughfares, invisible and subterranean, such as a tunnel that connects a cellar below the Temperance Hall to the cellar below the Kings Arms in the High Street.

John Kirby went on to tell me that at the lower end of St Thomas Street there are cottages whose basements are medieval remnants in the form of a vaulted beehive cellars. He spoke of ghosts walking through walls mid-air, through blocked doorways, along invisible corridors in a house just off the High Street that is too spooky for local estate agents to venture in alone.

It was my original intention to find people who believed that they had a fragment of the Glasney building somewhere in their home and to talk to them about what this meant to them. The research would, I hoped, become an auto-ethnographic and chorographic survey or deep map about the Glasney site, so talking to people who lived locally and were physically associated with the topic of my research seemed a good way to proceed. The research would be, I initially imagined, socially engaged and relatively neatly bound. Ultimately however the bindings proved to be anything but neat and social engagement as a research strategy proved to be problematic. This is partly because the project was driven by an uneasy coalition between competing impulses; on the one hand, I was searching for the grain of what was then a generally under-researched site, to build layers of resonant data that might captivate participants but also resonate with other researchers in the field, such Shanks and Pearson, but on the other hand the research was also a quest for self-validation. In a world that seemed to be becoming, throughout the life of the *Trevisa Project*, increasingly divisive politically, violent and generally troubled, I needed to justify, if only to myself, a life driven by what many might view as an arcane set of behaviours irrelevant and incapable of making any positive difference.

2

a newly discovered
meteor shower, originating from Ursa
Major, the constellation of the Great Bear,
was visible in the night skies over Penryn
between the 1st and the 10th of November

it reached a peak of activity above us as we
sipped our tea in the kitchen

Trevisa described this constellation
– the most easily recognisable cosmic
feature in the northern hemisphere –
as a creature that circles the heavens
around the pole, the axis of the earth,
like a great bear pacing around a stake

the ancient Greeks told how Zeus had
fallen in love with a beautiful nymph called
Callisto who bore him a son,
Arctus, and Hera, the wife of Zeus,
in a jealous rage,
turned Callisto into a bear

when Arctus grew old enough to be a hunter,
he spotted a bear in the woods, and not
realising that the creature was his mother,
took aim and would have killed her.
But Zeus intervened and turned the boy
into a bear like his mother and placed
them both for safe keeping in the sky

they shone brightly and became ursa
major, the mother bear with her child,
ursa minor

Their stately progress, slowly season to
season, wheeling around the northern
skies infuriated Hera – and she
ensured that both constellations never
dipped below the horizon and so could
never refresh themselves in the cooling
waters of the ocean, never wash nor
quench their thirst

But there is an older story
about a bear goddess,
older than the story of Callisto.

It is mentioned in the first sentence
ever to be written down in Old Europe
that we currently know about. It was
inscribed on stone and dates to about
5000 years before the common era.

The *Bear House* narrative is an illustration of this dilemma. The people who live in the centre of Penryn, and who initially responded to the call for participants in the research project, tended to fall into one of two categories. These were either long standing residents, with an interest in the history of the town, such as those individuals already volunteering in the local museum or working in the library. These people tended to be networked into groups that valued the locality and wanted to promote Penryn regionally and nationally. The other group of people, living locally, who responded positively to the project, were newly settled students and academics, several of whom had moved from Dartington to work in the Performance Centre at Falmouth University.

The first group of individuals, during initial meetings to discuss the use of narratives about the dispersed fragments of Glasney, to build a sound walk through the town, had not come across the concept of a sound-walk before. The idea was not only new to them but conflicted with a booklet that already existed, describing features in the town centre with a map that visitors could follow to find them. This was a conventional town guide that had obviously involved significant investment in terms of time and money and was on sale in the museum. There was some understandable resistance towards becoming involved in anything that they feared might in some way undermine or threaten this investment. There were additional tensions within this group and complex micro-politics. One person complained, for example, that the freestanding noticeboard outside the town museum was regularly kicked over by a local resident, who objected to the word 'museum' as the institution had then no formal museum status and so should therefore technically only be described as a 'historical society'.

3

In 2007, Toby Griffen, an emeritus professor at the University of Southern Illinois, examined a series of marks that were incised into clay artefacts - figures of goddesses, animal/human hybrids or humans wearing masks, that had been discovered at various sites in Rumania, Bulgaria and Hungary, and produced, seven thousand years ago, by people we know as the Vinca. Archaeologists knew that the figures represented deities by working backwards from the myths and stories that have survived in this region and had assumed that the marks – a series of parallel vertical and horizontal lines and chevrons – were decorative and used to represent features on the body such as eyebrows, genitalia, necklaces but Griffin began to realise that the marks consistently and repeatedly related to particular figures – one set of marks on a generic fertility goddess, another on the body of the bird goddess and another on the body of the bear goddess.
When a series of the same marks appeared on an object that was not figurative – on a spindle whorl – a circular pierced weight that functioned as a flywheel on a hand spindle – like a miniature men-an-tol – he realised that he was not only looking at art, but also at writing – the earliest European conflation of image and text. The spindle whorls were the property of women who, we know from early decorated pottery and other artefacts, would carry the spindle with them, spinning as they walked.
Griffin was able to decode the phrase, which, as is appropriate for a spinning object, read the same forwards as backwards - the bear goddess and the bird goddess are the bear goddess indeed.

In my wildest fantasies about the project, as something which might impact positively on the town and its local economy, I imagined producing work which might help to establish Penryn, with its fascinating history and architectural richness, as a kind of *story town*, where tourists could come to participate in any of several sound walks, making purchases in local shops and cafes on the way, The town had a recent history of economic decline, isolated by the new by-pass that funnels tourists away the town centre towards Falmouth. For some people the new universities, with a campus on the town's periphery, did represent an opportunity to develop projects and relationships that would celebrate the uniqueness of its historical town centre, but the people invested in this way of thinking about the project tended not to belong to the first group of local residents described above. They were instead currently students, alumni or part of the academic community of Falmouth University.

For a while I struggled with what felt like a potentially disparate collection of irreconcilable stakeholders. In the end, pragmatically, I decided just to get on with making the work. I also decided not to sideline any willing participant just because they happened to be involved in theatre or dance. If they were living in the centre of Penryn then their story was as relevant as anyone else's. But this decision meant that I had to revise what I had imagined to be an audience for the work. There were not going to be large numbers of people using a sound walk to canvass, survey, provide feedback and data to build my research around. My concept of audience shifted to become more intimate, small scale and largely focussed on individuals already predisposed to be interested in the kind of work I was producing.

Early attempts to position my own creative responses to the past within a single genre, or field, were also problematic.

4

The bear goddess and the bird goddess are the bear goddess indeed. The phrase has a rhythm like a mantra or a tango - a beautiful, passionate dance. But it is enigmatic and needs to be understood within the cultural context of its time. 7000 years ago the cult of the bird goddess was waning, but the bear goddess was gaining in popularity until eventually, having subsumed the bird goddess, the bear goddess was adopted into the pantheon of the Greeks and became Artemis, the paradoxical huntress and she-bear, the quarry and the ferocious spirit of the hunt. Hunters made sacrifices to Artemis, but would not speak her name aloud because it was taboo. So, although the word for the bear goddess is Artemis in Greek, Artio in Gaulish and Arth in Welsh, the word for the goddess incarnate is 'bee wolf' (Beowulf) honey wolf or 'bear', which literally means 'the brown one' or 'the brown shining', like copper. Artemis - for early Europeans - represented the fragile relationship between humanity and nature, which must be kept in balance.

Greek Art depicts her standing, holding a spindle, spinning the destiny
of the world.

the bear goddess and the bird goddess are the bear goddess, Artemis, indeed

In Cornwall, in the 1300s, when Trevisa was writing, the she-bear was revered as a symbol of maternity and fertility. Illustrated medieval manuscripts show the mother bear licking her new-born cub, which was commonly believed to be born formless, into shape – the origin of the phrase. In the bestiary, from book 18 of 'On the Properties of Things,' Trevisa translates the words of Bartholomaeus Angelicus in this way 'the mother licks the lump, and shapes the limbs with licking.... For the whelp is a piece of flesh little more than a mouse, having neither eyes nor ears' and so the bear-goddess became associated with female creativity, with motherhood and with the female artist.

At first I wondered whether what I did could be described as historiographic metafiction. Linda Hutcheon (2002) first used the term "historiographic metafiction" to define texts that describe historically "real" events whilst simultaneously offering a "denaturalizing critique of them" (3). This 'denaturalised' text makes the reader aware that a historical text is constructed and subjective, rather than disguising the artifice of the writer to the point where it becomes invisible. I thought that if I was to produce a series of hybrid objects, located in the 'real' or historically verifiable realm of a material trace of the past, but combined with an obviously playful anachronism, then it would prompt an audience to wonder where the boundary between 'history' and 'fiction' lay, and encourage an interactive, critical engagement with the work. The dilemma I confronted was that this intention is not an ironic one, nor one that attempts to undermine the idea of an historical understanding of Glasney as a site, or Trevisa as a figure, or to somehow devalue their local and national significance. Instead, the reverse is the case; I was trying to rehabilitate and make visible an idea of the site and the figure within a cultural imaginary that would coalesce from a series of dispersed fragments. While I initially struggled with placing this intention into a particular genre, towards the end of the research project I began to feel that that it could be described as *metamodern* as it oscillated between ludic interventions and absolute seriousness.

As my research activity became more intimate, reflective and quieter I found myself wanting to go back to first principles, to a sense of origin. The origin of my own ideas, my creative impulses, fascinated me. I was curious about where these ideas came from, in terms of my own experience, and then how these ideas might be articulated and find an audience and a home. The *Bear House* narrative became concerned with origins, the first writing and early stories about the female creative impulse, for example. Edward Casey was particularly helpful to me as I tried to come to grips with the project in the early stages. He describes the idea of the creation in Plato's *Timaeus* as having an implied interaction between a male demi-urge and a pre-cosmic, female body called the Necessity (ananke). But '. .time is a distinctly late addition to the scene of creation. What matters first and foremost is the fate of space' (1998:32). The Platonic matrix, or chora, is not composed of the elements, and not therefore a material entity, but seems to function as a mirror, reflecting the physical. But it is not a void and not placeless. For Casey, this implies that the chora is composed of regions where things come into being and then cluster within similar groups (34). So the chora is occupied, like a field might be occupied with crops, ready to be winnowed and sorted into categories.

Casey goes on to describe how other creation myths, such as in Genesis, also imply that the creative event can only occur when the conditions are right – where there is darkness, where there is an unformed earth, where there is a region for creativity to take place in. So the creative event is co-existent with locus; it has a 'bivalent logic' (1998:13). In these myths the primary creative act, one of differentiation, is coincident with the creation of a perceptible, differentiated sense of place.

When I read about the earliest creation myths that describe a chaos that existed before creative intervention by a demi-urge, I was struck, not by their strangeness, but by a sense of recognition.

Social engagement as a research method was an inherited term that did not fit my own research enquiry. The languages and conventions generally associated with communities of practice inside academia felt increasingly unsettling. I knew I needed to be guided by and confident in my own way of working but it was initially hard to feel permitted to do this. I wondered whether I needed to discover my own research language – maybe one that followed the principles of Trevisa's doublet - a new hybrid with the echo of the old term inside it – but was not sure what this might be. I knew no word to describe research that procee-ded via intuitive recognition of the hollow in the grass where a beast had slept and to which it would return, if I was sufficiently vigilant, patient and still.

The darkness, the cyclonic raging of winds that whip up a collection of gases that provide the gods with nowhere to rest their feet, could be describing the loneliness of one of the outer planets in our own galaxy that has never been inhabited, only documented by a visiting deep space probe. As a child I was fascinated by the idea that the light from a distant star had travelled to me through time, through millennia, and that somehow could represent the body of the star as an entity in a constellation when it no longer existed in its own time.

I spent a lot of earth-time as a child feeling perplexed by space, wondering how starlight, for example, did not get obscured by the billions of other objects in space between me and that star, unimaginably distant. Later I witnessed lunar and solar eclipses that only served to compound this confusion. It is still hard for me to comprehend, that somehow in the vastness of distances between objects in our universe, starlight manages to be caught on the vault of our own night sky, like glitter hurled against a black umbrella. But while I am aware that my understanding of distant galaxies in deep space, informed by satellite telescopes and other modern technologies, is very imperfect, there is for me a metaphorical, imaginative resonance between this knowledge and philosophical ideas from our own deep history that beguiles me and underscores, at an intuitive level, this research.

The story of the Bear house was shared with me one afternoon in November and the narrative that emerged was co-created in that, from a recorded conversation, I built a tangential series of interconnecting ideas. These ideas were returned to the original participants in the conversation, for their approval. A few minor amendments were suggested - full-names rather than shortened versions were preferred, for example. The sound-work that resulted was a combination of extracts from the original recording overlaid with the new narrative. It was played to a group of research participants at a symposium in the Borlase Smart rooms, St Ives, in 2015.

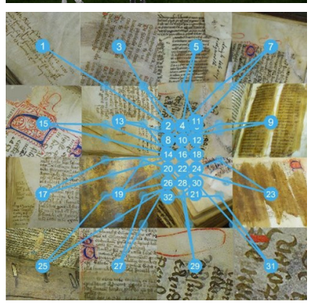
When I try to imagine the chora, it is as difficult for me as trying to come to terms with ideas that belong to astrophysics. Ultimately, though, the chora is meaningful within my own creative practice when I think of it as a metaphorical description of a mind beginning to categorise, to sort elements into regions, or zones with analogous constituents. Plato writes that the chora is the 'nurse of all becoming' (52d-53a) which for me is analogous to the act of thinking itself.
The *Timaeus* becomes more accessible and relevant, not as a description of a primary creative act, as a 'big-bang' moment, nor even an evolutionary series of causally unfolding events. For me, the Platonic chora feels like something more internal, more intimate, like what creative thought itself might be and what the pre-requisite conditions might be for creative ideas to flourish. For Casey, the chora has a hybrid, dream-like quality, insubstantial and yet essential, where it 'precariously and provocatively straddles the tenebrous middle realm between the mythics of elemental matrices and the physics of pinpointed space '(1998:37). It is this 'tenebrous middle-realm' that is the most potent locus for my own creative practice.

ANECDOTA NUMBER TWO: *ELVIS THE BULL*

Historical context is a phrase introduced by Trevisa when he translated it in the *Polychronicon* as the *making and story of books*. I am grateful to Bruce Holsinger (2011) for his argument that the subtlety of Trevisa's translation implies that the book's physical structure, and the way that the book is manufactured, affects the way that information about the past is transferred from one time frame to another, so that the phenomenon of the book's structure functions as a kind of meta-text. With this in mind I undertook a photographic survey of the Glasney Cartulary that is currently held in the archives of the Cornish Records Office, Truro.

A cartulary is a document that describes the day-to-day business of an institution but it does this in terms that carry more legal weight than a simple chronicle, like the minutes of a meeting might do today. A cartulary is then a synthesis of apocryphal, historical and legal matters, to do with charters, deeds and accounts and the activities associated with these that sometimes retrospectively set legal precedents. The Glasney cartulary is written in several hands and is essentially a transcription, in Latin, of various legal documents, bound together for safekeeping. But because the original documents are not themselves readily available, it is not possible to assess how accurate the contents are, or to know whether any particular scribe took liberties with the source texts.

He(a)rd



Elvis the bull grazes fields in Mabe, above College Lake. He is a direct descendant of the white cattle that grazed there centuries ago, just after the Black Death hit Penryn in 1349, the year before the Ordinalia was composed at Glasney. From the first incidence of the disease, at Weymouth, its port of entry on the south coast, it took three years to wipe out half the population of England. Labour became a scarce commodity. Corn ripened then rotted. There were not enough people left alive to sow, to reap and then gather in the harvest. It was easier with a depleted workforce to raise sheep and cattle and it was these sheep and cattle that provided the raw material for the dissemination of ideas, portable ideas, which could be carried round the country, like the plague that had, in a sense, made the spread of these ideas possible.

All that can be said with certainty is that the cartulary, whilst being one of the oldest surviving documents associated with the College has been copied from original documents which may no-longer be in existence and to which I do not have access. When I contacted the archivist at Exeter Cathedral about sourcing information, including these texts, for example, I received the following email, dated 7/2/2011

Sorry not to be able to help you, Valerie.

The Dean and Chapter of Exeter had no connections with Glasney College, so I'm unable to tell you anything about its lectern or bell. I should think the D&C must have been glad they didn't have to worry about the buildings there - definitely a case where a site survey would have been a good idea, before committing to erecting something heavy on top of a swamp.
Best wishes,

Angela Doughty

Cathedral Archivist

The Glasney Cartulary is an object that is intact and, for me, phenomenologically thrilling. White gloved and under surveillance from video cameras and beady-eyed archivists, I relished each indecipherable page before discovering, with a shock, vandalised pages that expunged post-reformation all references to Thomas Becket, the saint to whom Glasney is dedicated.

These pages were poignant, immediate and miraculous because they released a smell that transported me to a medieval pine forest, the charred resinous remains of which were used to manufacture the ink. So while my knowledge of Latin is insufficient for me to be able to read the document, it had meaning for me in the present - as an object - through my senses.

That I was able to touch something that connected me with medieval Penryn felt like a kind of vertiginous falling down a rabbit hole, through the wormhole model of folded space-time, through a time tunnel. Later, recollecting this experience I would characterise it as an example of a feminine sublime.

For Bruce Holsinger (2011), there is 'a growing suspicion of historical context as a tired naiveté and, on the other (and much more commonly) a largely uncritical invocation of context as an essential part of historical understanding' (611). Holsinger compares two translations of the Latin phrase 'contextus historicus' from Higden's *Polychronicon* (a universal history of everything) that Trevisa translated from Latin into the English vernacular at the end of the 14th century.
The first, by an anonymous translator renders the phrase literally as 'contexte historicalle'. But Trevisa, according to Holsinger, translates this phrase in a more complex way '…with a creative sense of English as a medium of historical understanding in its own right, favoring doublets and other

Domesticated animal breeds were smaller in the Middle Ages than they are today. An entire sheepskin provided only two pages for the scriptorium. A herd of cattle needed to be slaughtered to produce the parchment for a single book. Elvis has a dim awareness of this holocaust, a kind of tribal memory of the sacrifice made by his ancestors. Every year on the 29th of December, the feast day of Thomas Becket, stigmata appear on the hide of Elvis, the white bull. Traces of text from the Glasney cartulary bloom luridly for several weeks before fading in the Spring. When the Black Death reached Cornwall, Trevisa was seven years old. Five individuals perished at Glasney and were buried in a lime filled pit below Glasney playing field. Trevisa was fortunate to survive at all.

expansive devices as part of a broader effort… to make Higden's original most keenly relevant to his own moment' (609). Trevisa translates Higden's in *historico contextu* as 'in the makinge and bookes of stories' (sic) so that the physical construction and spatial organisation of the book, as a vehicle for carrying stories of the past and transmitting them to the future, like a baton in a relay race, is as important creatively, in terms of radical historiographic invention, as the content. Holsinger goes on to conclude that:

> The act of historiographical preservation and reinvention, the work of the chronographus or chronicler, must be understood as a transtemporal and collaborative enterprise, composed of the affect, emotions, and ethical dispositions of actors both living and dead along a temporal continuum embracing the texts that carry history with them and make of it a disruptive moral force in the present. This continuum is, for lack of a better phrase, historical context (611).

ANECDOTA NUMBER 3: *GOKY AND THE AIR MUSEUM*

A/spire

Fig 5: architect's visualisation: AIR building 2012

The work that comprises the *AIR Museum* was installed at the inauguration of the newly built Academy for Innovation and Research (AIR) in 2013 as the University College, Falmouth was on the cusp of acquiring full university status.
The AIR building appeared to offer state of the art facilities, green roofed and digitally sophisticated. New post-graduate researchers, like me, were uprooted from the old portacabin on the edge of the campus that had formally been our base room and offered a section on the ground floor of the AIR building in which to 'hot desk'. The interior could not have been more strikingly different; it was pristine, newly carpeted and decorated as tastefully as a middle-class living room in shades of grey and lavender blue.

My cohort was shown the AIR Sandpit, described on the university's website as 'a digitally enhanced creative solutions resource' (2017), where we would meet for our monthly seminars. We were given formal Health and Safety advice on how to sit down and rise from over-sized beanbags that provided alternative seating.

In the computer modeled visualization of the Glasney building constructed by Sean Broderick, and based on archaeological evidence from the site, there is no spire. On permanent display in the local museum, a model of Glasney, constructed by final year Falmouth University students, has a tall, elegant spire, though there is nothing in the historic record to suggest that this had ever existed.
In the digital visualization of the AIR building, planned for Falmouth University, the architect has placed the structure in an imagined bucolic landscape, which stretches to the horizon, uninterrupted by any other building, rather as if it had landed fully formed in the later Middle Ages. There are discrepancies between what might be, what exists currently and what once was, in local centres for academic excellence, both historic and contemporary

The work I wanted to install in the void space of the AIR building was visualised in computer generated illustrations by Ian Biscoe.
Our conversations resulted in images that gave a kind of weight and solidity to what had been a very fragile, tenuous line of enquiry.
The idea for *avoid a void* became expressed using the kind of software routinely used by architects and engineers. Instantly, the visual language that was similar to the one the building had been designed with originally made the idea feel appropriate, relevant and embedded, even though, in reality, the installation would be the opposite

The AIR Sandpit, the primary teaching space, was to be income generating, we were told, by being hired out to external agencies for micro conferences and *Away Days* and this would take priority over any bookings we might need to make for research purposes. The building was open-plan, we were also told, to maximise chance creative encounters and collaborations. The Fine Artists amongst us blinked and looked about, dazed and disorientated. Three would decide, over the coming year, that doctoral research at Falmouth was not for them. They would be followed by several members of the professoriate, which depleted the research expertise available generally across the university.

But before any of this occurred there was a grand, formal opening event for the new AIR building, which had been constructed with EU funding. PhD researchers were invited to showcase work. There were those amongst us in their second and third year of study, but the majority were, like me, relatively new to this brave new world, to its languages, protocols and procedures. But we decided to give it our best shot.

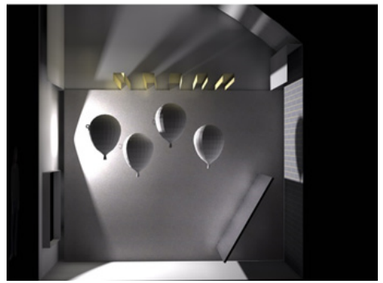
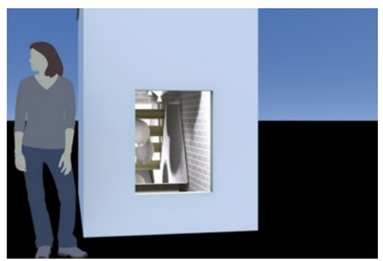


Fig. 6 : Visualised conversations of AIR building installation produced by Ian Biscoe, 2013



A kayak, built by committee, was suspended from the ceiling. There were old remnants of the newly refurbished Porthmeor studios, St Ives, on plinths and live abstracted drawings made on wipeable surfaces using liquid chalk pens. Those of the group who were able to present work on a screen seemed to be at an advantage and appeared to attract the most attention and support from the group that was becoming known as the AIR residents.

The driving force behind the PhD contribution, as facilitator/curator, was Ian Biscoe, a generous, energetic fellow doctoral researcher, with research interests in experimental architecture. It was following a conversation with Ian, which he visualised using a series of drawings, that I decided to install work in a void space in the AIR building, replacing an inspection panel with a bespoke Perspex window through which the work could be viewed. Unscrewing the panel in a wall near the main entrance revealed the guts of the building, the messy actuality of the data cables that provided the seductive, mythic allure of the infographics displayed on digital touch screens and monitors.

To acknowledge the EU funding that had financed the construction of the AIR building, all labels attached to the AIR imuseum objects were written in French

in the void between the floors of the curated past

Fig. 7 : plan views of first and second floors of AIR Building, Falmouth University, 2013

Inside the void I suspended several white, helium filled balloons tagged with words relevant to research writing (*virtual, accidentally, concept, intellectual, fiction*) that were innovations of Trevisa. An angled mirror made it possible to view the cluster that was weighted to occupy the midpoint of the void space.
It was my intention that these words would be scattered like seeds inside the building's infrastructure over the coming weeks as the balloons, once released from their weighted tethers, gradually deflated.

Helium is a finite resource which is predicted to run out sometime over the next ten years, but it is vital to medical procedures such as MRI scanning. So I also wanted to draw attention to the dangers inherent in partying with a commodity so precious and so at risk. Initially I was quite pleased with my first title for the piece *avoid a void*, until someone pointed out that they thought they had seen a piece of work by Professor John Hall with the same title and, later, I discovered it was also a chapter heading in Casey's *The Fate of Place* (1997).

Perhaps controversial, in terms of what might be perceived as a challenge to the university's sense of itself, was my decision to dismantle part of a landmark new building, to install an installation that looked untidily domestic, like remnants from a child's birthday party, inside one of the walls. Perhaps even more controversial was my intention to honour the work with a blue plaque. I ordered one with the motto *on this spot Val Diggle, poet, turned sideways and experienced an overwhelming sense of uncertainty and disbelief*. It was then that Ian advised caution. He said that nothing could be screwed into the walls, that the plaque needed to be lighter in weight to be attached possibly with Blutack, or, ideally, not at all. We needed to keep faith, to be optimistic. Was there not something here that ran counter to the celebratory mood of the opening ceremony? In the end I was not able to install the plaque, nor able to attend the opening.

Throughout this process I was reminded of a time when, as a Masters student, I had struggled with a brief that required me to write about my personal aesthetic development. In the end I produced something that I had also called *The Air Museum*. The title referred to a period in my childhood when I had felt that everything that I was being taught was weightless and insubstantial, as if it belonged to a series of expositions attached to artefacts from a museum that floated somewhere above the clouds. The only knowledge that grounded me was acquired through creative activity. Art making - drama, music, dance and writing poetry tethered me, umbilically, to the real world, made me notice stuff in the moment, calmed my anxious mind. *The Air Museum* text appeared in *Artstrip*, a University of Exeter publication edited by Malcolm Ross (1998).

Helium balloons, suspended in the void space of the new AIR building, were tagged with vocabulary that was Trevisa's innovation and which felt relevant to research at Falmouth University.

Over time, I hoped that the balloons would deflate subtly and invisibly under the skin of the building, dispersing their seed hoard into the fabric of the place

/emˈpirik (e)l, imˈpirik (e)l

The unease that I felt as my fellow researchers attempted to embed themselves inside the AIR building mirrored this sense of fragility and the threat of being detached, not only from what felt meaningful for me as a creative practitioner, but from a research community that no longer shared my values, that was becoming depleted, hard to find and equally hard to feel that what I was trying to do, which made no obvious links with creative industries, had much value.

But after the opening of the AIR building, to my great surprise, I was approached and asked to produce a list of words introduced to the English vernacular by Trevisa, which could be used to name the rooms there. For a time it appeared that my seeds had actually sprouted. I supplied a list of possibilities and suggested *goky* for the Sandpit. *Goky* is not in fact a word that belongs to Trevisa. It is Cornish for 'wise fool'. But it appears, curiously enough, in *Piers Plowman*, and is one of a series of Cornish references that suggests, according to David Fowler (1998) that it was Trevisa and not Langland who was responsible for the 'b' text of the poem.

If my suggestions for the naming of the rooms had been adopted, it might have provided some useful early evidence for Trevisa's rehabilitation into the cultural imaginary of Penryn. But, with the knowledge I subsequently gained, I now realise that this might have been a politically sensitive move. There are, for example, local sensitivities amongst Nationalist groups towards Trevisa, because of the lack of absolute evidence for any similar contribution that he might have made to the Cornish language.

In conversation with a teaching assistant attached to the local secondary school, I also subsequently learnt about a set of issues around naming a room there. She was part of a new initiative to establish a 'nurture group' to support children in year 7 identified as being at risk of not achieving their full potential educationally.

They needed to find a name for the base room that would accommodate these students and, as a resident of St Thomas Street, with an interest in history, she suggested *Glasney*. To her surprise, after a meeting with the governors, this name was rejected. In this particular educational context, the name was too politically sensitive because, according to the governors, it had negative connotations as it was pejorative, local shorthand for a social housing estate, adjacent to Glasney field, that was perceived by some to be problematic.

In the end, most of the AIR building became office space for the VC and her administrative teams and the base room for courses in digital gaming and business entrepreneurship. Postgraduate researchers, including myself, rarely worked there independentally. I felt increasingly disenfranchised from the nascent research community at Falmouth and surrendered to digression and drift, to the impulses of my creative activity, standing like a donkey in a storm on the headland, with a light tied to my tail.

At the start of my research, the road ahead of me could only be visualised imperfectly. It was given a semblance of authority and plausibility in the documents I had to produce as part of registration and confirmation processes, but I knew, even then, that the practice would lead me to places that could never, and arguably, should never, be anticipated at the moment that those documents were required, for institutional purposes. In my imperfect visualisation of the AIR installation and its impacts, caught in the excitement of an enterprise with a critical, or at least mischievous, edge,
I was also paradoxically at once seduced by, and insensitive to, the limits of the language I was attempting to celebrate.

Trevisa, like other linguistic innovators of the period, re-energised the English vernacular, enabling individuals to philosophise in their native tongue more efficiently.

Accidentally
Alteration
Apprehend
Apprehension
Apprehensive
Associate
Atom
Communicable
Communicative
Complement
Convenient
Cooperate
Dimension

Intellectual
An angel is intellectual substance
Magnitude,
Moderate
Potential
Probable
Symptom,
Simple,
Substantially
Virtual

Tyme is the dimension of chaungeable thingis touchinge moeving and abiding

Discontinual
Discrete
Effective
Essence

The essence of angels is simple and immaterial, distinct and discrete

Instrumental
Instant

But none of the words he invented appear in Wyclif's translation of the Bible from Latin into English at the end of the fourteenth century. There is no occurrence, for example, in this translation of the words *formal, probable, exist, idea, absolute* or *dimension*. According to Franklin (1983) these abstractions are colourless and generalised and so may have not have had sufficient poetic appeal for Wyclif's team of translators that probably included Trevisa.

Trevisa's exact contemporary, Julian of Norwich, related her *shewings*, which she experienced in 1373, in her *Revelations of Divine Love*. Her writing is the first that we know to be written as autoethnography by a woman in the English vernacular. But none of Trevisa's vocabulary appears here either, in spite of it being a mystical and philosophical account of spiritual transformation. Shakespeare, surprisingly however, seems to have relished these words. Franklin (1983:184) cites the following as evidence for this:

Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions?
Merchant of Venice III.i.

A foolish, extravagant spirit, full of forms, figures, shapes, objects, ideas, apprehensions, motions, revolutions
Love's Labour's Lost IV.ii.

Seven hundred years later, the position that Trevisa occupies as innovator of an abstracted research vocabulary used to support scientific methods, amongst my own cohort of doctoral researchers in a university a mile or so from where he studied as a child, is an interesting one. His translation of Higden's *Polychronicon*, which generated some of this vocabulary, contains, in marginalia, an extended argument against Higden's account of the death of Aristotle. Higden, following Nicholas of Nazianzus, his source text, describes how Aristotle, when confronted on the seashore by tides that were behaving anomalously, continually ebbing and flowing, shouts angrily at the waves that he does not understand them and subsequently drowns. Trust the evidence of your senses to form an empirical understanding of the divine in Nature, implies the subtext, and you will come to grief. Robertson (2017) describes how Trevisa is outraged by this description of an ignominious end for the individual he calls the 'prince of all philosophers'. Everyone knows from a book *The Apple* Trevisa argues, that Aristotle died, not alone on some seashore but surrounded by his students. He was briefly sustained by the fragrance of an apple held under his nose, which reminded him of the beauty of a divinely ordered universe, until his hands shook, the apple fell and he died peacefully.

The potent symbolism of the apple as Tree of Knowledge is important in Christian thought and features as a structuring device in the *Ordinalia*, which was composed at Glasney during Trevisa's lifetime. For Robertson (2017:95), this alternative account of Aristotle's death makes him "..a regenerate Eve, one whose search for natural knowledge unites him with the divine". She goes on to describe how in Trevisa's version, the death of Aristotle is 'no-longer an exemplum against natural philosophy: instead it affirms a route through the senses to the spiritual' (95) and is consequently an endorsement of the reliability of the senses to observe, record and assess knowledge claims empirically.

So while Julian of Norwich may not have needed the abstracted philosophical language that Trevisa invents in the body of his translated *Polychronicon*, she may just possibly have been aware of his impassioned asides in the notes he made in the margin. At any rate, she describes a vision in which the totality of the divine universe is revealed to her in a hazelnut held in the palm of her hand, which has an uncanny natural resonance with Trevisa's account of Aristotle's apple.

As for Shakespeare's use of Trevisa's vocabulary, it is perhaps less surprising in the context of performance. As inert, abstracted words on a page they may be, as Franklin suggests, generalised and colourless. But they are words that are subsequently embodied in the performer and animated viscerally and sensually through the performance, which is then witnessed through the senses of the audience, empirically, through their experience of the play.

Tales told by an apple and a hazelnut held in the palm of the hand

How is it possible to think of a concept, or to apply it, without relevant vocabulary?

Is the range of vocabulary in any language representative somehow of the limits of thinking available to its speakers?

Thinking about my praxis as something that could be articulated in a series of *anecdotae* was a breakthrough moment. I felt empowered to make the writing up phase of the thesis, for example, feel as creative as the research I was reflecting

Instead of an adversarial defence of ideas, I began to think of an *enfolding* or gathering in of research outcomes, in which evidence could be made visible, acknowledged and cherished.

There was an iterative, rather than linear or unilateral dynamic to this process.

I would only know through the knowing.

I could only make in the making

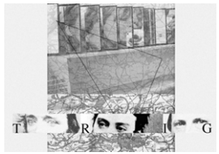
The writing was a research method through which ideas came into being, re-membered, re-made in the process of reflection

After the first flurry of activity in the AIR building, my own research floundered, I began to feel uncomfortable with the kind of language that I was expected to acquire and use. The AIR installation had been driven by what I had initially understood to be a specific requirement of academic process, namely an implicit need to critique, justify and defend my work in the context of the work of others. But my work became increasingly hard to distil to a manageable set of principles or intentions, I felt tongue-tied, unconfident and speechless, at a telos or stopping point, at the limits of language. There was no vocabulary that felt native to me, which fitted a description of the empirical sets of data emerging from the experiences generated by an iterative engagement with my practice. I needed some new words

ANECDOTA NUMBER FOUR: *FALLEN LANGUAGE*

Trevisa's Fallen Language and Black Speech on the Edge of the Wild

The chorographic survey that comprises the *Trevisa Project* involves the invention of images and objects in response to particular places and particular people, to build what Lev Manovich (2006) describes as an *aesthetic layering* of data. My practice aims to articulate the poetics of an environment that has been augmented by tenuous associations between sets of ideas, that also function as catalysts for the writing and the making. Previously, my work has included *TRIG*, a geopoetic response to the life of the Victorian explorer William Wills, sited at three points of a geographic triangle and structured by a ritual engagement with landscape and Devon dialect words, slipping into extinction such as *kex, northering* and *halseny* – the art of divining the future with a hazel wand. In April 2013, I travelled to Melbourne to complete the Australian half of this narrative. *Lightwife* was a response to the life of the first lighthouse keeper in New Zealand, a woman called Mary Jane Hebden Bennet. Texts were structured according to colours from the spectrum and other scientific principles associated with what was, during her lifetime midway through the nineteenth century, the emerging practice of photography. The writing coalesced into a soundscape designed to be listened to while cycling along the route beside Wellington Harbour to the site still occupied by the old lighthouse. Another work, *Fractal Case*, was made in response to a collection of photographs, found in a recycling centre, which documented a journey I co-incidentally had made as an undergraduate, to the same Italian destination. Work here was structured around these images and overlain with poetry that dealt with the uncanny in remembered places, in what Dylan Trigg (2012) calls *augmented familiarity*.



Research into the site of Glasney College and the figure of the medieval translator John Trevisa began to establish an explorative, chorographic web of tenuously interrelated plausibilities. The term cultural imaginary is important here. By this I mean the term that for Claudia Strauss (2006) has come to replace *culture* because that term is currently associated for some theorists with fixity, otherness and homogeneity. I wanted my own imaginary to be the opposite of these values. I imagined that in the process of writing tangentially and collaboratively, in response to the reconfiguration of the dispersed fragments of the College building I might also rehabilitate Trevisa into the cultural imaginary of the town, augmenting the familiar.
I hoped, driven by an impulse to democratise my practice, which had become *hefted* or naturalised in me, that this would have a positive, socially cohesive effect on a particular community in a particular place, for which the experience of being involved in the project might add to a storehouse of shared beliefs, fantasies and memories, casting an aura over the everyday, in a constellation of cultural fragments.

But setting a boundary for this kind of research proved to be challenging. When I travelled, metaphorically and literally, to one of its edges, deciding to research Trevisa's life after Glasney, when he was a student at Exeter College Oxford, an emerging strand began, very unexpectedly, to be a tenuous relationship between Trevisa and Tolkein.

Inevitably, I then realized, the discrete elements of this imaginary could not be as complex as they would be if they were each the exclusive focus of my study, but I hoped that their impact might lie in their immersive, chorographic totality.
When I looked on the Exeter College website, I found an open letter from Biz Stone, the founder of *Twitter*, explaining that he is proud to be associated with the refurbishment of Exeter College's library. This is where Tolkein also studied and as a student invented the language of Elvish. Stone links this creative incubation space with another, a garage in Silicon valley where two students, Sergey Brin and Larry Page, enriched another kind of language by writing the code for Google.

J.R.R Tolkein 1937 ***wilderland*** *from The HOBBIT or There and Back Again*

Three maps then began to feel significant. The first is Tolkein's *Edge of the Wild* in the illustration of *Wilderland* from the frontispiece of *The Hobbit*, published in 1937. It represents a very clear, straight margin over which you step at your peril.

The second describes pictorially an area of California in Palo Alto known as Silicon Valley, marking the position of the garage used improvisationally as Google's first headquarters.

Glasney College prepared the sons of local Cornish gentry for entry to Oxford University and Trevisa is no exception to this career path. Fowler (1995) describes how he studied at Exeter College, Oxford, which was linked to educational establishments, such as Glasney, in the diocese of Exeter. Trevisa's name appears on the College rolls, as having entered in 1362, when he would have been about twenty years old. So while details of Trevisa's life at Oxford are visible in conventional archives such as these, I felt that my tenuous web of associations between Trevisa and Glasney might be strengthened if I could somehow weave them into the Google/Tolkein narrative, articulated by Biz Stone. So a third map became significant, a map of the world from Higden's *Polychronicon* that Trevisa translated. In this map, Jerusalem is at the centre, east is at the top and a red triangle, so dangerously close to the edge of the known world that it is ringed about with angels is *Anglia*, or England.

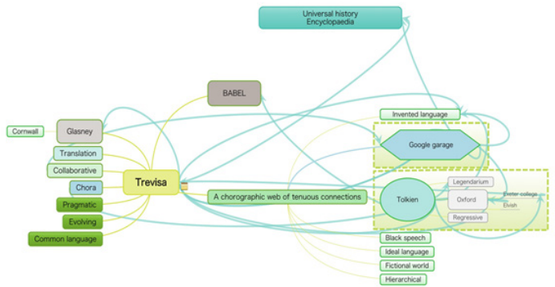
fig 9. a visitors map of Palo Alto

Trevisa was seven years old when the Black Death entered England by Weymouth. By the time he was nine, more than a third of the population is estimated to have been wiped out by it. Well-educated priests were consequently thin on the ground, corruption was rife and Latin, a clerical language in which the Catholic Mass , for example, was celebrated, was sometimes parroted without understanding. But Trevisa did not choose to criticise the clergy directly. Instead, shrewdly, he offered his translation of the *Polychronicon* as a resource that priests could use to improve the content of their sermons. It was then that it occurred to me that, together with *On the Particularity of Things*, a medieval encyclopaedia and another epic feat of translation by Trevisa, the *Polychronicon* could be read as a kind of proto-Google.

fig 10 : Map of the world c.1350 from Ranulph Higden's *Polychronicon*, England

I already knew about Trevisa's language invention – his contribution to the English Language through words that he had to invent because, prior to his translations, an equivalent for certain Latin words or phrases had not existed in English - and I was already curious about what exists at the limits of language. We become aware of what Jeff Malpas (2007) describes as the inaccessible heart of language, when we struggle to find the right word and arrive at some kind of stopping point or 'telos', at the threshold of the unutterable, at the edge of the wild, on the brink of falling. The most fertile place for my creative practice is on this cusp, on a kind of vertiginous pivot point between mythos and logos, where I seek to ground or (re)place the placelessness of knowledge acquired through technologies such as Google through a rapturous engagement with landscape.

The trialogic (Google/Trevisa/Tolkein) relationship was an exciting discovery, but it also presented me with a challenge, namely to be sure that the scope of my research remained focused. For this to become a legitimate part of my project I wanted to find a connection not only between Trevisa and Google, but also between Trevisa and Tolkein, more than the fact that they were both alumni of the same Oxford College, and discovered, through visualising the data, that another kind of falling was significant for them both, the myth of the fall of Babel.



A Babel moment can be found in Fritz Lang's 1927 film *Metropolis* (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dlfvBgBDpm0) which it is possible that Tolkein had seen. It is a prescient motif that is used by Lang to illustrate a communication disconnect between intellectuals and workers. The Babel image depicted in medieval manuscripts is one that Trevisa would also be familiar with. For Christians, like Tolkein and Trevisa, people once had a unified language, spoken by Adam as he named the beasts in the garden of Eden, given by God, the language of paradise. After Babel, God scattered everyone and their language was fragmented, confounded.

fig 11
Illustration to a Bible circa 1250 Historiée Rylands French MS 5 folio 16r John Rylands University Library,

Tolkein was a medievalist and his attachment to the period was expressed nostalgically, informed by the aesthetics of the Arts and Crafts movement and William Morris whom he greatly admired. It inspired what he described as a secret vice – the invention of a mythology for England that was 'elf-centred' complete with complex interweaving strands of stories about heroes and monsters who spoke grammatically consistent, invented languages, described comprehensively by Dimitra Fimi (2010). He referred to this work as his mythology, his *legendarium* which was driven by a desire to fill a cultural void. What appeared to him to be missing were stories, myths and legends that were specifically English and heroic.

It was this *legendarium* that provided background material for his two most popular works of fiction – *The Hobbit* (1937) and *The Lord of the Rings* (published in three volumes, 1954-55). Interestingly for me, the characters in these works refer to the events of the *legendarium*, so that, in the context of Tolkein's writing, this mythology becomes history. And for Tolkein, outside his fictional world, the events of the *legendarium* added to a folkloric English past, and became as real to him as WW1 or the French Revolution.

His stories, he said, were to provide a world where his invented languages could function – not the other way around. As a student I remember hearing a talk by Tolkein's daughter, Priscilla. She described how her father was fascinated with the sound of words. He thought, for example, that *cellar door* was beautiful, but had no phonetic fitness because it was more beautiful than the thing it signified. His invented languages tried to combine the aesthetic qualities of the languages that he admired, such as Finnish, with *phonetic fitness* – matching the sound of the word with the thing it signified.

His personal tastes informed the way that he constructed the ideal, least changeful, language of the Elves, whereas the Black Speech of Morgoth, associated with the evils of Sauron, was a fragmented cacophony, post-Edenic, post Babel. Tolkein knew about language decay, a theory that all European languages were decayed fragments from an Indo-European stem. To create an ideal language that had not changed would make it closer to the original stem, to an Edenic language that, for a Christian, originated with God.

So Tolkein's *legendarium* for England and his language invention would seem to be co-dependent, implying that in some distant, mythological past, an uncorrupted language was spoken by semi-divine creatures in an English Eden, a world to which, according to Fimi (2010), Tolkein thought of himself as a kind of gatekeeper, remarking 'I hold the key'.

Trevisa, actually living in the medieval period, appears to me to be under no such illusions. At the end of the 14th century, he wrote a defence of the art of translation in the form of a *Dialogue between a Lord and a Clerk*, at the beginning of his translation of the *Polychronicon* from Latin into English. Here the character of the Lord remarks that *communication is a form of translation* - an idea that has a very contemporary resonance. In a sense Trevisa is defending Fallen Language here or what Tolkein describes as Black Speech, because it is the only kind of speech that is available to us, functioning not as a gate-keeper, but as a facilitator. The dialogue, in this paratext, has echoes of banter between another pair of stock characters, Pike and Captain Mainwaring from the TV sitcom *Dad's Army* (1968-1977), and can be loosely paraphrased thus:

> How do you know that you won't make a mistake? asks the Clerk.
>
> Stupid boy – replies the Lord - However hard I try, it would be impossible for any translation to be perfect, and that's a good thing, because then the literate can access mine amongst a variety of different translations into English, and then the *orally literate* - who have had these texts read to them – can debate their differences in their native tongue and work out for themselves which one they think is most reliable.

I think that this dialogic, and comedic proto-script, which Trevisa seems to have relished, strengthens the likelihood of his exposure at Glasney to the *Origo Mundi* and other plays that belong in the cycle of the *Ordinalia*.

In contrast with Tolkein's regressive *legendarium*, Trevisa's text celebrates its provisionality as it invites the reader to take notice of any differences between this translation and another, to become active within it. Trevisa's Middle Ages does feel more contemporary than Tolkein's Middle Earth. Only a very particular kind of mind could believe, as Tolkein did, that *untranslated* Elvish, through its phonetic fitness, was fundamentally more beautiful, affecting and communicative than the English vernacular (Shippey cited in Fimi 2010: 76). I think that collaborative associations of experts from diverse fields who come together to solve linguistic problems makes Trevisa's philosophical world more like Silicon Valley than Rivendell.

John Trevisa's name is entered on the roll of Exeter College, Oxford and dated 1362. However, in emailed correspondence Frances Cairncross, the rector of the College, told me that she was unaware of him. This was at first surprising but then interesting as it appeared to extend the site in which I felt that it might be possible to rehabilitate Trevisa as a forgotten figure.

In 2013, I visited Oxford and made ambient binaural sound recordings in the grounds of Exeter College. It was the end of the Hilary term and students were removing their belongings from the halls in readiness for the Easter vacation. The most resonant soundmarks became the rhythmic clatter of trolleys loaded with rucksacks as they rattled over the cobbled quadrangle and a persistently squeaking door, not to a cellar sadly, but to some inner sanctum off limits to the casual visitor. The mythologies around the creation of Google, the writing of Elvish and Trevisa's life at the same Oxford College became embodied through this performative relationship with the site and ultimately informed my own cultural imaginary on the edge of a new kind of wild.

VAL DIGGLE: A POETICS OF UNCERTAINTY

ANECDOTA NUMBER FIVE: *COMMUN*

In March, 2014, I was invited to give a public lecture as part of the *Raising Glasney* annual lecture series that attempts to share ideas relevant to the locality with the academic community of Falmouth University and people who live in and around Penryn, Cornwall.
I was asked to focus on my doctoral research into the life of Trevisa, and his connections with Glasney College, so I prepared a presentation that I called *anecdota: the secret history of unpublished things.*

Posters were printed and distributed around the town with an image of Elvis the Bull and his stigmata, to draw in the crowds. I arrived early and found that Will Coleman, a former member of Kneehigh Theatre who was presenting with me, was already there. He gave me a scrap of paper with the title of my presentation written down in Cornish. It was not an exact translation he said, but as near an approximation as possible.
I smiled and thanked him, uncertain about what to do with the information. Was I supposed quickly to learn how to pronounce it and then introduce myself and what I had to say in Kernowek? I was already nervous enough about speaking in my first language. I decided not to and instead, after being introduced by the organiser of the event, invited the audience to consider the past as constructed and provisional, to think about moments of emotional intensity that flare in our memories, complex and layered and ultimately imaginary. The past, I argued, is an occulted thing, forever obscured and always in the context of an imaginative web of associations, sequences, patterns and consequences that we call *time*. Even if those moments are recorded photographically we need an imaginative mind-dependent connection for them to be meaningful – we need a narrative.

A ruptured moment – the idea of the commun and the impossibility of community

(The following section is based on a paper presented at the *writing communities* symposium, Falmouth University, 2014)

As my attempt to document the competing voices that were attached to the contested site of Glasney College and the figure of Trevisa, at any one moment it only seemed possible to write about communities in the plural; the community of the real – conversations/interviews/encounters with living people and places in real time are layered with communities of the virtual – where information is mediated via new technologies – the invented personae on sites attached by digitised umbilici to bodies that occur in what cyberpunk literature refers to, less than beautifully, as meatspace. And then there is the imagined community of the audience or readership that encounters the work, for whom I imagined I was addressing the work, like talking to a congregation of invisible friends. For me, additionally, there is another kind of community, one that exists in an imagined past. This past seems to be in a constant state flux.

In my mind's eye there is a child holding on to the end of a length of rope, the far end of which is secured to the branch of a tree. The more the child agitates the rope the more it snakes in the air making peaks and troughs, the more the rope shakes the tree, the more the dry leaves rustle. Some of my writing was produced in a state of agitation after listening to the dry rustle of past events in diaries, old letters and photographs, in books. I cannot separate this agitated self from the events that took place in historical communities.
We are co-dependent. We make ourselves up.
There is a psychic dimension to this writing, a by-product of an agitation that pushes me over a threshold where the word 'I' comes to signify more than myself. The word 'I' refers instead to a performer in a performative space or zone, which is the work or creative output that arises out my creative processes. This 'I' is constantly shifting, chimeric, reconstructing and looking askance at what previously had been taken for granted. I made, and continue to make, myself up. Sometimes, to help me deal with this I publish work or perform under an altered name - 'Lori' rather than 'Valerie'

I am not sure what people were expecting, but I don't think that it was this. I talked about how I was curious about the difference between histories and fictions – *histoire et récit* – between the tale and the telling of it. I said that something quite recently had happened to history, that it had stopped being a tale told exclusively by priests and rulers and had started to include other voices, the voices of women, of the poor and illiterate, of the disabled and those who had been on the losing side in battles. I said that our own lived lives were constantly betraying us and that as we aged we hardly recognised our own reflections in the mirror. I showed them a picture of the memorial to Glasney College set in Glasney field and said it was a monument to collective amnesia. This was my first big mistake. I suggested that what we could construct was our own *plen-an-gwarry* – a playing place for imaginative truths. I showed pages of the Glasney Cartulary which had been vandalised with layers of ink, obliterating, back in the 16th century, the bits of Cornish history that, post-Reformation, were offensive to Henry VIII and his heirs. I said that the heart-stopping vividness of experience was never available in conventional archives because it was not readily available to language.

So where is the past and what has happened to it? I said. No-one offered any suggestions. I said that I thought it was all around us and inside us, illuminating our inner world. I said that it was in art, in the painting and the play and the poem, and for new historicists, it was not in the grand and generalizable, it was in the small and particular, in the anecdotal.
While we needed to be faithful to our recorded pasts that capture facts and figures, births and deaths and economic transactions, how we flesh out the skeleton of this information to make it an expression of our common humanity, with intense emotion, beauty and terror, was up to us.

In the context of serial performative personalities, an uneasy coalition of multiple communities articulated in multiple voices was impossible to negotiate in a way that came close to what I understood to be authentic. There was always something or someone who was forgotten, mislaid, misreported, or ignored – the victim of circumstance, of bad timing. What was forgotten or invisible in the conventional archive and what remained was, if I am honest, largely luck. And some things wanted not to be noticed, like escaped prisoners of war who duck as the searchlight passes over their heads. Sometimes darkness is necessary to make things visible just as the signature of a lighthouse is recognised by an absence of light in the beat of blackness between flashes. In conversation there were silences, omissions and hesitations that were as eloquent as what was said. But in the end, fragments of the past coalesce, in what I came to describe as my cultural imaginary, with overheard conversations, recorded interviews and performative encounters with site. These encounters evolved from a series of sensory intimacies with lived place.

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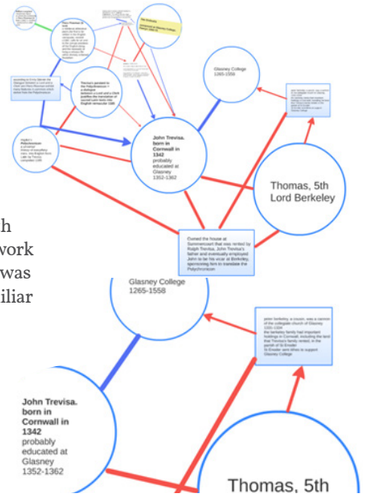
Instead of a more conventional series of oral histories, for example, the conversations I recorded with people function as creative provocation for my practice It was my intention that a poetic enquiry would describe an immanent experience of place and engender attachment and affection for an historical figure and, for what, I began only gradually, to realise, was a culturally exploded/explosive site. The Trevisa Project relies on conventional archival research processes to some extent, but these processes took on a different kind of life in response to my own state of mind, my overt and hidden agenda, and revealed to me a kind of secret life – their anecdota - the secret history of unpublished things. But as a writer and visual artist, I initially felt that I was an outsider, geographically and culturally. So without engaging socially and collaboratively I felt that the research risked saying to communities, look, you have a great story here that you either may not know about or may have forgotten about and I can tell you about it, probably better than you can tell it to yourselves. This was not something, I imagined, that people wanted to hear when an artist-scholar lands in their midst and decides to pay them some attention.

I told them that for Joel Fineman, writing the ***History of the Anecdote*** (1989) it was possible to use anecdotal evidence forensically to reveal the fingerprints of the non-surviving. Fineman describes how Clifford Geertz, the anthropologist, refers to the anecdote as a potato unearthed in a field. The anecdote interrupts analytical, scientific structured writing methods. It punctures these discourses with the frisson of the real so that the reader would pause or - as Geertz remarks – stumble even, on the threshold of history, so that the ephemeral, the over-looked, the suppressed, the anachronistic would transform older histories into something radically strange and enigmatic.



By the end of the last century the anecdote had joined what had become known as *counter-history* with its roots in rebellion. Radical, anti-racist, feminist it was history from below, so as an artist making work about the past I was not, I explained, interested particularly in history, or historical fiction. Instead I was trying to invent my own counter-history, de-familiarising old ways of thinking and making the familiar strange.

I talked about the distributed fragments of the Glasney College building and the stories I was gathering from people who believed they had such a fragment in their house or boundary wall. I invited people in the audience to submit their own secret histories and unpublished stories via a *Trevisa Project* website, to take away a cardboard bird box and fill it with images and texts to become part of the next Trevisa Project *shadow* hide installation which was, I explained, an on-going attempt to fold audiences inside the work.

Finally, I told them about Trevisa and his contribution to the English language, which allowed people to philosophise for the first time in their mother tongue. This was my second big mistake. I then showed a diagram that illustrated that Trevisa could be connected, not only to Glasney College and to the *Ordinalia* , produced there during his lifetime, but also to 'b' text of the medieval poem *Piers Plowman*. The red lines, I explained, were secure connections between people, places and events that were part of the conventional historical record, the blue lines were lines of possibility.

Look at that haircut - are you startled by
the general air of poverty and that car?

It is a real car,
not that I travelled in it - I came by train
to Cumbria from Cornwall where I
regard you now - my future self –
you are not half as disturbed to see me
as I am by you, believe me

The next person to speak was Will Coleman who had been researching *plen-an-gwarry* and discovering several new locations for them throughout Cornwall, locations that had been forgotten or over-looked. Unfortunately for Will, he had technical problems and was unable to show his slides, so instead he focussed on responding to my talk in a way that did not disguise his irritation. How dare I say that Glasney field was a monument to amnesia? No-body could forget the way that the Cornish population had been decimated by the genocide perpetrated by the psychotic Henry VIII who had systematically set out to eradicate Cornish culture. Why should anyone care about Trevisa, when he had made no contribution to the Cornish Language? How dare I refer to English as our mother tongue and Cornwall as a county when it had never been a county – it was a duchy?

I was totally unprepared for this attack, slightly stunned and perplexed by its ferocity. I did my best to explain that Trevisa had lived in Cornwall 200 years before Henry VIII came to the throne and could not have predicted the threat to Cornish culture that Will Coleman had just described. I said that I did not think that Henry's policies were particularly and exclusively aimed to eradicate Cornishness, as he had died 20 years before the Prayer Book Rebellion, and that, anyway, many other regions, and proto-universities like Glasney, had also suffered during the Reformation. I said that when Trevisa was alive the radical and transgressive project was to disseminate information, normally controlled by political elites and articulated in Latin or Norman French, in the English vernacular, to establish a cohesive sense of nationhood.

I said that Trevisa appears to have loved Cornwall so much that he wanted it to be included in this nationalist enterprise, not excluded from what must have felt like an exciting new world filled with exciting new possibilities. This simply would not have been possible if he had restricted his translations to the Cornish language. It may not even have been perceived to be necessary to have Cornish translations of the *Polychronicon* and the *Particularities* because it was my understanding that the Cornish language, in Trevisa's time, midway through the 14th century, was not considered to be under any particular threat.

But this of course was an Anglocentric point of view. To Will, to his friends and supporters I was yet another Anglophile apologist.

About half of the audience appeared to be Will's friends and supporters and none of them seemed to be interested in discussing the content of my lecture. What did concern them was the new Combined Universities of Cornwall, which they believed was financially administrated in Exeter, did not welcome local people and had no dual signage (English and Cornish) on the campus. This was not what they had fought long and hard for, they said. I explained that I was only a research student and could not really be expected to represent the Universities' senior management nor their Board of Governors. But later, on reflection, I began to realise that my creative practice, to free poetry from the page and make site responsive work, was, whether I liked it or not, inescapably political. I had begun to occupy space and that space, naturally enough, was contested.

This encounter bothered me. I had been underprepared for what unfolded. So I decided that I needed to find out more about the political landscape of Trevisa's Cornwall in order to speak more sensitively about my research to contemporary Cornish audiences. Perhaps I needed to find a way to mediate the past and present, to make this discourse more relevant, in Holsinger's words, to my own moment. Holsinger's (2011:259) definition of historical context as a project that was essentially trans-temporal and collaborative, 'composed of the affect, emotions, and ethical dispositions of actors both living and dead, along a temporal continuum, embracing the texts that carry history with them …[to make]. . a disruptive moral force in the present' had, for me, a renewed kind of potency.

Just as I had been fascinated by the search for a founding moment in Platonic philosophy, I began to look for first principles and the origin of the Cornish people ethnically. This proved to be chimerical. Cornwall, immediately prior to the Penryn town hall lecture, had just been officially granted ethnic minority status. Will Coleman had opened his speech by repeating, to resounding cheers, 'April 24th 2014…April 24th 2014..'. But recent studies into the DNA of the British Isles had revealed, surprisingly perhaps, that each Celtic nation was so genetically distinct from each other, that Cornish people were in fact biologically closer to the English than the Welsh or Irish.

There was obviously something at work, though, in spite of this, something not fact responsive, to have fuelled Will Coleman's irritation and to make him and some of the *Raising Glasney* audience feel misrepresented, historically and by what I had had to say about that history. Whether or not those individuals who identified as Cornish on that occasion were ethnically distinct scientifically was irrelevant. They felt their cultural otherness keenly.

David Rollison (2010), however, describes historical context as having *acoustic* properties that are inseparable in mainland Britain, from the 13th century onwards, from the rise of what he calls a common vernacular language, that includes the east of Cornwall. In his account of the rise of the English Commonweal/th, Rollison begins by describing contemporary forensic archaeology that has traced the ancestral DNA of mainland Britons to 6000 years ago, pre-farming, when a wave of colonisers arrived by water. To the west they arrived by sea, hugging the coastline of Brittany and washing ashore in Cornwall, Wales and Ireland. To the east they journeyed along the great rivers of the Danube, Rhine and Seine before crossing the English Channel. 68% of English people, and 76% of those who identify themselves as Cornish, share these ancestors in common, which makes 21st century Europhobia in Cornwall ironic, to say the least. An older gene pool connects us to very first settlers who ventured into mainland Britain just after the ice receded at the end of the last ice age, when Ireland was joined to the rest of Britain by a land bridge, and when it was possible to hop from island to island along a complex archipelago that connected East Anglia to mainland Europe and Scotland to Scandinavia.

The eastern shores of Britain, being closer geographically to the rest of Europe, became more populated and thus more genetically and culturally diverse than in the remoter and less populated regions to the west, like Cornwall. But in spite of this there are perhaps surprisingly few differences in terms of historic DNA to tell the regions apart or separate someone with a Celtic ancestor from another with Anglo-Saxon heritage.

By the 11th century this population had become settled, established and potentially taxable enough to be attractive to a foreign invader. When William the Conqueror (1028-1087) came to the throne in 1066 it heralded the start of 300 years of French rule that systematically relegated the native English population to the margins, excluded from all institutions of power.

All the business of State in the circles of influence around the English throne was conducted in Norman French. In 1215, the Magna Carta which Rollison describes as the first public act of a nation expressing its own identity (85) was issued in Latin and Norman French versions only.

The French colonisers satirised the *nativi* across mainland Britain as brutish, beer swilling and profligate, living in hovels, compared to their cultured, wine-drinking selves, who lived frugally and spent their money on beautiful buildings, like Gothic and Romanesque cathedrals. For the colonisers, the *nativi* could not be trusted with power and did not deserve it. Rollison lists examples of this racial stereotyping that occur in literature of the time, including customs and rituals, stories and heroes, morals and values, food and drink and, especially, hairstyles and dress (43).

Feudally distinct from circles of power, labourers who were either serfs, tied in service to a local landowner, or freemen, paying rent but technically under no-one's authority save the monarch, had never had any right to influence affairs of state. The conquered populace, including the Cornish, kept their heads down and pragmatically synthesised, or assimilated, the conquering population as they had done in the case of successive waves of invaders before them. But the Domesday book, compiled in 1087, the year of William's death, evidences that just twenty years after the Norman invasion only 8% of the land in England was owned by people with English names (41). The geography of the land was beginning to be expressed fiscally, divided into counties, hundreds and vills or parishes to facilitate the harvesting of its wealth. Whilst it may lay claim to having an ancestrally distinct regional identity, Cornwall, schizophrenically, was also a county for administrative purposes.

Half a century later you had your haircut in Cumbria after
a dim afternoon walking in Caldbeck up the Howk
How they reminded you of your aunties the old ladies
gently gossiping, shrouded in hairspray and clear plastic
pixie hoods to keep them from the rain
fair stotting on the flags

In the centuries that followed, which included the time that Trevisa lived through, the foundations of English life and its vernacular revolution were established. The 14th century was a period of dramatic and rapid change, driven in part by the brutality of the Norman invasion that had divided England into two great classes; the power base around the monarch that was linguistically and ethnically French, and those they characterized as the ignorant 'others' the length of the kingdom within and beyond Cornwall. This included serfs who were routinely mutilated, tortured, burned or hanged (Rollison: 42) and fit only for enforced servitude. It is hard to imagine a separate colonising class of English in this narrative who would eventually be responsible for the cultural eradication of the Cornish by genocide, according to some Cornish nationalists, for the English and Cornish together, laterally homogenised by belonging to the same generic class of peasantry in this period, were very much the oppressed rather than oppressors. However this hard-core dualism, a process continuing during Trevisa's lifetime, guaranteed the rise of a mediating class, the 'middles'. It was this bottom-up movement, according to Rollison, with its roots in the senior ranks of the conquered English and the disaffected knights, local barons and more junior ranks of the assimilated French ruling classes, that began to express the discourse of politics in what became known as 'Middle English'

The vernacular revival, in which Trevisa was instrumental, was powerfully present in the 14th century 'socially, institutionally and discursively' (46). By 1300, following Medieval boom years, the English population had reached a peak of over four and a half million. Fifty years later plague had reduced it by over a third and it would not recover this peak until the Industrial Revolution. The first quarter of the 14th century was characterised by catastrophic harvest failures so that shortly after Trevisa's birth, when the Black Death reduced the English population to two and half million in a matter of months, it decimated an already weakened ecology. This demographic crisis is one of the oldest to be documented in world history and as the population contracted it '…coincided with an evolving intellectual and political revolution that generated a growing body of …written information about itself' (64). It became the language of popular dissent and rebellion, expressed increasingly in documents that refer the idea of offences against the oppressed 'other', the *commun* or *communality* (92) in the English vernacular.

Her fingers lightly touched your temples
Where are your from, then? Where are you really from?
It was like warm milk, the anticipation of telling her,
filling your throat. You settled in the chair
strands of your hair on your lap, the floor, like
the leaves had settled on the water earlier that day
catching the rim of the holy well. Well
well my mother is from here, from Cummersdale
two villages down stream
oh? OH right, from Cummersdale?
Not from round here then, not properly Caldbeck

How much this proliferating discourse was genuinely felt 'lies at the limits of feasible research' (Wood cited in Rollison: 92) and the *commonality*, as a class, is also hard to define. But when Trevisa was a child in Cornwall, and Glasney College was an institution at the peak of its creative activity, the *commonality* was beginning to be structured. In the first half of the 14th century, before the Black Death in 1349, approximately half of all households were 'free' (97) paying 'free rent' and theoretically duty bound to no-one save the monarch. The remainder, the serfs, were 'bonded' to a local landowner and laboured for them in return for food and accommodation. Rollison however describes how this structure was not always stigmatised or the feature of social discrimination. Freemen and serfs would often be friends and neighbours, working side by side collectively harvesting, drinking, gossiping, celebrating and worshipping. In the case of the parishes that supported Glasney they would also be participating in the collective, socially cohesive production of dramas such as the *Ordinalia*. Individuals tended to be judged on merit, not class.

they characterized as the ignorant 'others' the length of the kingdom If serfdom was more typically characterised by poverty, dishonesty and lack of enterprise it was also perceived as having some political and economic advantages, such as a degree of protection and security. So, according to Rollison, 'serfdom was not killed off by passionate resistance, political pressure and rebellion, but simply died of old age' (96).

It is the horizontal cohesiveness of the lowest levels within and beyond Cornwall in medieval society, rather than lateral divsions either side of the Tamar, that perhaps helps to explain the conservative adherence to the principles of largesse in the work of Trevisa, in his paratext to the *Polychronicon*, in the Cornish *Ordinalia* and in the radical *Dream Vision of Piers Plowman*. These texts express, in common with the writings of Julian of Norwich, a contemporary of Trevisa, an imaginative search for a *treuthe* that is the responsibility of the individual. This search is thwarted, not because of the presence of a social hierarchy per se, but when the individual components of that hierarchy are corrupted. Will Coleman had asked me why Trevisa had left Cornwall and, after Oxford, gone to Gloucestershire to work for his patron Lord Berkeley. I replied that he was not the first or last Cornishman to travel far afield for the sake of of job. Learned men, according to Rollison, were taught by pagan philosophical sources via Greek and Latin texts that '… it was the highest virtue to seek positions at courts to put their learning into the service of others.…[for]… John Trevisa.… It was the highest vocation of learned men to act as counsellors to lords and princes. This orientation is as old as universities'(27). The archives of grammar schools up and down the newly emerging commun are littered with the names of Cornish teachers. Linguistically dexterous, men of Cornwall seem to be greatly valued as educators during Trevisa's day. His own reference to John of Cornwall, no-longer teaching grammar to boys in Norman French, but instead teaching them in English, is a marker of the decline of Norman French during the latter half of the 14th century.

The *Raising Glasney* experience unsettled me for weeks. I wondered whether I should demand a rematch, to get another chance to present my case more carefully and with more tact. I had been so excited by the way that the web of plausibilities, articulated by David Fowler (1995), connected Trevisa to Glasney and the 'b' text of *Piers Plowman* (c1380) and could be extended to Emily Steiner's (2005) observation that source texts for the *Polychronicon* and the *Plowman* were identical. Steiner also notes here similarities connecting the expression of largesse in Trevisa's *Dialogue between a Lord and a Clerk* , the paratext to the *Polychronicon*, with the conservative spirit of largesse, calling for a renewed maintenance of a status quo, in the 'b' text of *Piers Plowman*. I had noted Manning's description of largesse, or the bestowal of gifts from the powerful to the weak, in the *Ordinalia*. So I thought I might be able to extend Fowler's, contested hypothesis that Trevisa, not Langland, was the author of the 'b' text of *Piers Plowman* by considering the likely impact of the *Ordinalia* as poetry and production on a child educated at Glasney in the late fourteenth century, and examining the forensic fingerprint of this impact in works attributed to Trevisa.This excitement had made me complacent. I forgot that no-one is as excited by her research as the researcher is herself and I had thought, mistakenly and naively, that local people would inevitably also be excited about their local boy who, in my opinion, had done good.

But I was comforted by a growing conviction that only through an imaginative coalition and realignment of knowledge about Glasney, Trevisa and the *Dream Vision of Piers Plowman* is it possible even to begin to place Trevisa in Penryn when the *Ordinalia* was devised. The insecurity of the knowledge around discrete components of this thesis are more secure when they are considered collectively, when the fragments are reassembled as a *poetics of uncertainty*. The diversity of my multi-arts practice, and the chorographic breadth of the widely ranging ideas embedded in this practice, is essential to secure my thesis when so little remains of its individual components in the archive and the reception for the practice is so precarious. Conversely, and unsettlingly, however, it appeared that when Glasney was raised as an entity, metaphorically realigned and reassembled from fragments, it became attached to narratives of colonial oppression and subjugation. In this imaginative realignment I was complicit as the teller of tales, made responsible for its magical revival and for the painful tribal memories that were simultaneously resurrected.

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ANECDOTA NUMBER SIX: *ANCHORHOLD*

The idea of *anecdota* emerged two years into this research. From the Greek *anekdota*, a feminine principle referring to a female either too young or too old to be fertile, or who has not been given permission by her father to marry, it began to function, in the context of this research, as a counterpoint to the idea of the ***chora***. Beautiful and complete, at a nodal point in a familial network, yet unable to bear children and so contribute to an extension of the network, the idea of *anecdota* seemed to exemplify being-in-time, or what Fineman (1989) describes as a framing concept, both inside and outside historical successivity (61). I discovered the writings of Joel Fineman quite late on, after, in fact, the ***anchorhold*** piece had been made, but his ideas helped me unpack the work, retrospectively and reflectively, which had been constructed instinctively at the time without much resort to theory. In a *History of the Anecdote: Fiction and Fiction* (1989), for example, he describes how *New Historicism* was 'a general appeal for an historiographic consciousness and conscience…materialised primarily in studies of English Literary Renaissance ' (51) and a reaction against, in American academic literary criticism , formalism, structuralism and agentless, scientific, formulaic elitism. Although New Historicists, according to Fineman, refused to specify a methodological programme for themselves, preferring to ramble haplessly through the historical archives, it was 'primarily designed to mark off or out a methodological and self-described interdisciplinary approach to the embedding… of literary artefacts (what was then still called literature) within the particularity of their social context.' (50).

Fig 12: *anchorhold* installed as part of the the *Trevisa Project* Newlyn Gallery: transition 10. Photographed by Steve Tanner

The reason for it emerging out of studies in the English Literary Renaissance in the way that it did during the early 1980s in Berkeley, California, was because the Renaissance period is characterised by an emerging scientific language which threatens to eclipse the anecdote's power to access the effect of the real. Prior to the Renaissance, the anecdote which Fineman describes as a 'historeme' or 'the smallest minimal unit of historiographic fact' (57) was a structuring principle in narrative examples of histories throughout the medieval period. They conflated histories of wars and conquests, and successions to the thrones of Europe with the lives of saints and their miraculous deeds. By the Renaissance period, according to Fineman, there was a crisis in scientific writing which became so formal and technical that ' the sedimented meanings embedded in it grew too faint to recall' (62-63) leading to a kind of forgetfulness that divorced knowledge from experience, so historiography gave over to science the experience of history, re-writing the anecdote as experiment.

Book 1	*De Deo*	On God and the names of God
Book 2	*De proprietatibus angelorum*	On angels, good and bad
Book 3	*De anima*	On the soul and reason
Book 4	*De humani corporis*	On the bodily humours
Book 5	*De hominis corpore*	On the parts of the body
Book 6	*De etate hominis*	On daily life
Book 7	*De infirmitatibus*	On diseases and poisons
Book 8	*De mundo*	On earth and the heavenly bodies
Book 9	*De temporibus*	On time and motion
Book 10	*De materia et forma*	On matter, form and fire
Book 11	*De aere*	On the air and weather
Book 12	*De avibus*	On birds
Book 13	*De aqua*	On water and fishes
Book 14	*De terra*	On the earth and its surface
Book 15	*De regionibus et provinciis*	On regions and places
Book 16	*De lapidibus et metallis*	On rocks, gems and minerals
Book 17	*De herbis et plantis*	On plants and trees
Book 18	*De animalibus*	On land animals
Book 19	*De accidentibus*	On colours, smells and tastes, substances, measurements, numbers and music

Fig. 13 From Elizabeth Keen's 2007 e publication *The Journey of a book: Bartholomew the Englishman and the Properties of Things*

Trevisa's English translation of Bartholomew the Englishman's Latin De Proprietatibus Rerum or *On the Particularity of Things* is commonly described as a kind of Medieval encyclopaedia, the first in English. It includes a herbal and a bestiary amongst 17 other sections.

But Keen (2007) resists the idea of the *Particularities* as an encyclopaedia

> ...with consequent emphasis on its apparent failures of logic, objectivity and consistency. A modern response to it may involve pleasure and a sense of participation in glimpses of narratives and scenes from everyday life; a panorama that a reader could enter at any point, pull apart into separate Books, or re-read many times — one tempered to the needs of readers with close links to a rural community or accustomed to monastic reading practices (9)

The non-linear format of the work that could be enjoyed by being randomly accessed resonated with my original intention to archive this research in the form of an inter-active e-book. I was also struck by Keen's use of the word *panorama* because of the historical links with the idea of a panoptic or panoramic display as *chorographic*. This is an idea which I revisit in the creative audit section of this document.

The following extract is based on a paper *(the remembering body and other fictions)* originally associated with installed work presented at *Fascinate: Thoughtful Technology & Beautiful Interfaces*, Falmouth University, 28-30 August, 2013.

Often the visual information about an historical site is extrapolated from the slenderest of physical evidence. What remains that can be verified, for example, by an archaeologist, is often just a fragment for which the context has to be speculative.

Dr Graeme Earle, a senior lecturer at the University of Southampton, who teaches courses on virtual pasts, is a critic of his own discipline. For Earle, there is a tension between archaeological data and the way that information about historically significant sites is communicated via visual reconstruction. As consumers of this kind of visual information routinely inserted into TV documentaries or museum displays, we are often so seduced by the power of the graphic that we accept what is presented to us uncritically. New technologies create virtual worlds, immersive environments designed to persuade us that what we are witnessing is an authentic equivalent to, or recreation of, the past. I began to wonder whether it would be possible to make work in the super-disciplinary (post-binary) collaborative zone between the polar positions described by Earle and Michael Shanks (2012).

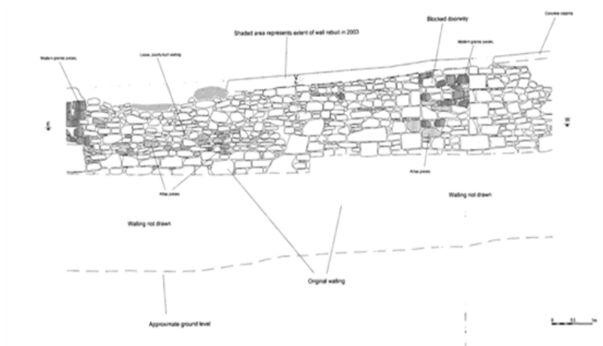


Fig. 14: Cornwall Archaeological Unit, 2003, diagram of the enclosure wall at Glasney College, Penryn, showing a blocked doorway

When I gave second year Theatre students a copy of the schematic diagram of the boundary wall across a section of the Glasney site, and encouraged them to find it and then write about everything that the diagram did not communicate, we were all intrigued by the label indicating a blocked doorway. It was possible to locate the rubble infill of the old doorway half way up the wall, and when we did, turning to our right, we noticed a pathway where a stand of bamboo had recently been cleared to stop it encroaching on the brickwork. At the end of the pathway was an enigmatic stone structure. Closer inspection revealed that this structure was not remotely medieval, but the remains of a public convenience left over from when the site had been used as a football pitch in the 1970s.

The male half of the edifice was open, but the female side was bricked over. It was a moment of epiphany. I realized that in all my research into this site and into the character of Trevisa there was no female presence, and it was this that prompted me to discover the parallel life of Julian of Norwich, born in the same year as Trevisa, and how she became an anchoress, walled up in a cell.

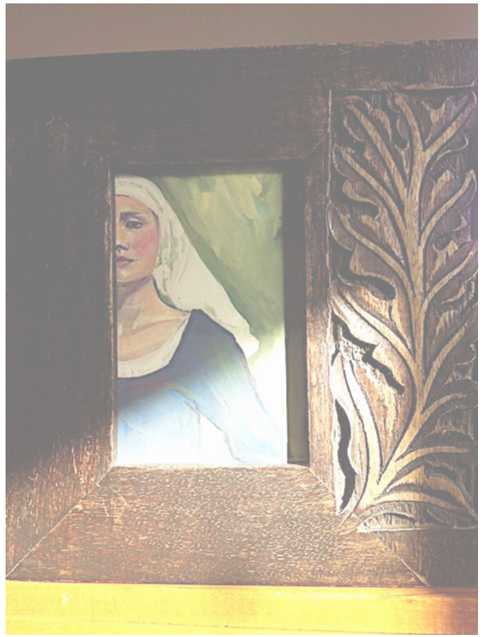
The cell, or anchorhold, of an anchoress is roughly equivalent to the area that is actively monitored in the motion capture studio at Falmouth University. I paced about there, thinking aloud, telling the story of birds trapped inside a church, of how confronted with more than one blocked doorway, literally and metaphorically, I had discovered the work of Julian of Norwich. Her writings that she called her *shewings* in which she always referred to God the Mother.were one of the first published texts written in English by a woman (c1395). These are accounts of her dream-visions in which she had seen the universe contained in a hazelnut in the palm of her hand.

Jens Meisner prepared a rendered, animated series of lines, the gestural, involuntary drawings that had been produced by my remembering body during this performance. I looked at this raw data and it seemed to me that in the negative spaces defined by the lines, there were two shadow figures moving towards and away from each other. I knew then that the *anchorhold* piece might become an expression of a long-distance relationship between two people born in the same year, one inventing vocabulary potentially for the other to use in her writing. I animated text to superimpose over the original data and set the piece to music arranged by Philip Stopford and recorded in Truro Cathedral.

It was only later, reflecting on this piece, that I realized that the work was not only about an imagined long-distance relationship between two characters, Trevisa and Jools the Solitary, but also about my parents, who were born a month apart and would shortly celebrate their eightieth birthdays. I remembered, how, as a child, I had watched light seep under my bedroom door and how it had flickered as my parents moved to and fro quietly on the landing. Their current physical and mental frailty and co-dependence also informed the *anchorhold* piece, without my conscious intention.

In the motion capture studio, holding a memory of a particular place in mind while trying to articulate a series of memories through spoken words, thinking aloud, my body moves without conscious thought. I am unable to predict the shape these unintentional, unscripted gestures will make when eventually they appear as lines on a screen or page. The motion-captured data my movements produce is derived from a series of Cartesian co-ordinates attached to particular points on my body, defined by my individual skeleton, unique to me. Yet the final trace is peculiarly disembodied. The reductive quality of the line strips out the layers that might provide subtler visual cues.

The relationship between histories and fictions seems to be described by the graphic line of this discourse. The data is obviously mediated technologically, but it is objectively geometric, mathematical and quantitative (historical) whilst simultaneously driven by the subjective qualities of my imagination and my own remembered experiences (fictional). It is personally unique but spills beyond the boundaries of my individualitty to provide an additional schematic reading of the performance. My voice is recognisably mine, but my body is paradoxically knowable and not-knowable, familiar and de-familiarised. Finally the linear trace of the performance, as an animated, aggregated drawing, describes a series of movements as moving images. It is these images that are the performative text of the event.



Stephanie Strickland has used motion capture data in combination with text to produce a digitally manipulated synthesis of poetry that appears to be written on water (http://slippingglimpse.org) and other electronic Flash mediated text. Susan Morris is a visual artist who also uses motion capture and other scientific technologies to make beautiful, involuntary drawings of what she describes as the ineffable. She collaborates with David Green, an artist and technician from Culture Lab at Newcastle University, to capture hundreds of recordings of her physical creative process, as she grids up a canvas to prepare it for painting, for example. It is Morris' intention that the resulting images should describe an essence that she recognises as 'creatureliness' first referred to by the literary historian Eric Santner (cited in Morris, 2013). Each one of these images may take months to edit and refine but both Strickland and Morris bury post-production processes inside the final outcome.

Morris' creative visualisation of data is seductive. Her work is reassuring. It suggests that if we abandon conscious thought and let our bodies behave spontaneously, according to the rhythm of our biological natures, it is possible to reveal, via scientific instruments, hidden, subterranean impulses that are generated automatically and that involuntarily produce beautiful outcomes. But because these outcomes are the product of art/science collaborations, and because the artists who collaborate in this way do not invite us to question their methods, they carry the authority and persuasiveness of the kind of technological reconstruction of the past that makes Graeme Earle nervous.

I try to use the creative potential in a partnership between an artist and a technologist to foreground the fiction that outcomes from such a partnership will inevitably create, once data, such as the motion captured trace of my remembering body, is refined, edited and aestheticized. I 'write' fictions with technologies and through these ludic interventions express a poetics of uncertainty about Glasney, Trevisa and what happens when we attempt to speak about the past. I need to understand these technologies only enough to use them as media with which to express new and fictive understandings of a site and the historical figures associated with it. I am utterly reliant on technical specialists to help me do this. But the visual data, produced by specialists, does not simply quantify or make visible hidden elements in my practice. Instead it functions as a catalyst, an aesthetic provocation that will hopefully initiate dialogue, scepticism and debate between the artwork and the viewer, rather than submerge them uncritically in an alternative, virtual world.

Looking back at this writing from the Fascinate presentation to engage in an analytical auto-ethnography of my own language throughout the research as it shifts, as the research environment itself shifts, as the debate becomes more nuanced, I notice the risk of materiality and literalism inherent in such an undertaking. The potency of the *anchorhold* piece, such as it is, felt diminished as I tried to describe it. In truth, the language act of the *anchorhold* initially failed to reveal that which I had secretly hoped for, namely the trace of Trevisa's invented vocabulary in the *shewings* of Julian of Norwich.

When I examined her writing, one of the first examples of autobiographical writing, indeed of any writing in English, by a woman, I was struck by the total absence of any lexical trace of Trevisa's contribution to the vernacular. Her 'shewings' are expressed in language that is embodied, phenomenological, visceral, descriptive and emotional whereas Trevisa's innovation enriches the capacity for scientific, philosophical and conceptual ideas to be expressed in English abstractly – the essence of his angel, for example is *intellectual substance*.

For a long time I ignored this in my written research because I had badly wanted a lexical connection, however tenuous, to exist between the two characters. I was not able to quieten my practice, however, which, in spite of me, continued to speak of this dilemma.

jools2 is an image of a female figure from behind, gathering a fold of headdress at the nape of her neck. There is text, mirror writing, a reversed script, which casts a shadow of itself over the image. It was my intention to provide a device that might serve to slow down a viewing of the piece, as the viewer pauses to decipher the text. But the mirrored script also points to a pivotal place in the dissemination of ideas through writing, conflating the handwritten singularity of the manuscript with the reversed text that is required for a printed multiple. Both Trevisa and Julian of Norwich occupy this liminal territory; their manuscripts would shortly appear in the new technology of print. But they appear, metaphorically in this painting, back-to-back, like bookends, facing opposite directions.

Then, later, I read Fineman and began to replay the Trevisa/Jools the Solitary narrative in my mind. I began to see the two characters and their particular writing modalities as absolutely complementary, with the one operating as a kind of cultural brake for the other. If Trevisa's innovation was to invent vocabulary that was technical, his choric *Properties* risked accelerating the handing over of historiography to science, which Fineman describes as characteristic of Renaissance writing. However, at the dawn of the fifteenth century, Julian's *shewings* retain the singular emotional weight of the anecdote, providing continuous access to the reality of experience. In the motion captured narrative of the *anchorhold* these modalities are synthesised.

Slowly, I began to realise that the quality of Julian of Norwich's intense descriptions of personal encounters with immanence present on a small, humble scale was one of the first descriptions of what I would come to recognise as a *feminine sublime*. By this I mean that the nature of my personal encounters with what I interpret as sublime experiences share Julian's sense of quiet attention. They are not overwhelmingly awe-inspiring, terror ridden or abject. They do not make me feel powerless in the face of natural forces that will not be subjugated. Instead they rely on a kind of meditative focus, not easily available to language, to reveal the vivid otherness of the object under consideration. This kind of attention is at the heart of my creative process, as an artist and as a researcher, and it requires the kind of vocabulary innovated by Trevisa as well as the anecdotal emotional weight of Julian's *shewings*. The idea is enfolded, shepherded, gleaned and gathered and, sometimes, accompanied and observed while it wanders.

Barbara Freeman (1995) critiques the idea of the sublime in Romantic poetry and in Kant's philosophical writing as essentially misogynistic. Here the expansive, awe-inspiring blend of pleasure and terror provoked by Nature is essentially a masculine privileged, phallocentric experience unavailable to women. The *feminine sublime* is instead domesticated and associated with beauty as part of an idea about gender that is socially constructed in the 18th and 19th centuries. But Freeman argues that there are many other kinds of sublime encounters that are not always about excess or confrontation with a bounded territory that appears to be ripe for colonisation while simultaneously unconquerable I was especially excited by her idea that the sublime encounter can be much more ambiguous than this. The *feminine sublime* can be fragmentary, permeable and expansive and not exclusively the domain of either men or women. It can be about flux and instability. The horizontality of this view reinforced my intuitive decision to work in landscape format on the writing for this research, where ideas might spill across the page and be mutually affecting.

In the *anchorhold* piece, as a totality, analogue work sits alongside the digital. The literalism of motion capture, a gaming technology, becomes an aesthetic provocation for poetry, for imaginative truth. These disciplines harken, lean and bend towards the other and in doing so are, I think, fundamentally transformed to become what Highmore might describe as *super-disciplinary*. Creative processes are aggregated, listened to, witnessed, That Trevisa was a prodigious innovator is not in dispute. As Maggioni writes, he

> …followed a coherent translation theory with the aim of producing [……..] an accurate, intelligible, and idiomatic version of the Latin original. He therefore molded his English to fit his source text closely, even though he always allowed for the necessity of keeping the original meaning in spite of linguistic differences. In doing so, he not only relied on all the internal resources of the vernacular and exploited all the lexical and syntactical potentialities of English: he also took advantage of his knowledge of Latin to enrich the vernacular with loanwords, lexical and syntactical calques etc., thus becoming an innovator and a pioneer (2002:28).

But ultimately, the *anchorhold* piece allowed me to meditate further on the vernacular and prompted me to wonder what *virtuoso* means in co-creative relationships which rely on exchanging skill-sets and different areas of expertise. It also made me begin to consider whether Freeman's ideas about the *feminine sublime* could be inextricably linked to my own search for feminised research processes to gather and later to present my research findings.

VAL DIGGLE: A POETICS OF UNCERTAINTY

ANECDOTA NUMBER SEVEN: *A HIDE FOR SHADOWS*

The frequency and pitch of exchanged emails, like a tuner on an old school valve radio, wobbling from high to low and back again, is an expression of my mood following news that my application to be part of the *Transition* series at the Newlyn Gallery had been accepted. Here was an opportunity to place the *Trevisa Project* squarely into the public domain. I was excited by the prospect and terrified in equal measure.

I had mentioned the possibility of collaborating with Simon Lock in my application for the residency to create a portable, micro-library that might be wheeled in and out of the gallery on a daily basis, stitching the town and the gallery spaces together in some way. I had met Simon during the *Fascinate* conference where he had presented intriguing work, such as a small animated sprite in a jar, during several promenade performances. We had chatted about my research and he had expressed a willingness to collaborate at some point in the future. A series of panicky emails, to which Simon was generous enough to reply, illustrates just how insecure my ideas were initially and how this insecurity manifested in a desire to use technology, not as a creative counterpoint, but to somehow compensate for what I feared might be lacking technically in my practice. Simon raises the idea of 'imagined tracking behaviours' for example, and I am quick to pick this up, replying that I am interested in 'the insidious use of RFIDs (radio frequency identifiers) that are routinely incorporated into our lives, without us ever being consulted or properly informed'. But the *Trevisa Project* had never actually been about this. As I read these emails back again I hardly recognise myself.

Running in the Family **– Michael Ondaatje**

I love the way that this book sits comfortably in the palm of my hand. I love its matt cover. My Aunt Dorothy, in her nineties, is extremely ill as I write this, unlikely to get better. She lives in the north of England. It is a long time since
I last saw her and I am afraid that I am not likely to see her again. When I re-read Ondaatje's description of his aunts it helped me to recover the memories I had of my own aunt, her vividness and eccentricity, to remember the joy she took in all of my stories. But most of all when I re-read in the acknowledgments at the end, on page 240, that a well told lie is worth a thousand facts.

My work tries to express the complex relationship between histories and fictions when we try to recall people and places from the past. Is there such a thing as an imaginative truth? Memories of my Aunt Dorothy are compromised by my heart. If you have an aunt, or anyone else, that you remember fondly, it would be lovely if you could bring this book with you to the Newlyn Gallery next week any time between 10 and 5 (19th -23rd November) and talk to me about them.

Thank- you!

(Left in a pasty shop)

I was required to spend 5 days in the gallery, treating it as an open studio. In a preliminary meeting with Blair Todd, who was curating the series, I reiterated my desire, initially expressed in my application, to demystify the gallery space and hopefully encourage people to linger in it, who might not normally think about visiting a gallery. I had an image in my head of the Wellington City library in New Zealand, which I had used regularly over a three year period, and which styles itself as *the living room of the city*. People are parssionate in their support for that library and for its many provincial sisters. They love it for being a safe space for their children to wait after school until they get home from work, for serving good coffee as well as archiving a generous collection of art house DVDs, for having a story hour for the over-60s and for letting homeless men snooze peacefully on one of the many comfortable benches under the picture windows overlooking the harbour. According to one of the librarians I spoke to several people have requested to have their ashes scattered discretely in the reference section under 'd' for decease.

To be true to my practice, and to meet the requirement of the brief, the work in the gallery would of necessity be performative, because the remit of *Transition* was not to have fully resolved and finished pieces on display, but to organise my time and the space provisionally as work-in-progress. For den Oudsten (2011), the exhibition space and the theatrical space are both 'islands of the extraordinary … poetic places in the landscape of our culture' (1) to which the audience is summoned. He goes on to describe how this is the opposite of the Internet, which invades domestic space. Setting up camp in the home of the user and sitting 'on the periphery of the commonplace …

the Internet and television deconstruct totality into singularities whereas the theatre and the exhibition create totality out of singularities" (1). I was drawn to this idea because it resonated with my initial impulse to gather the dispersed fragments of Glasney, metaphorically, inside new narratives about the site. I was also interested in the idea of *summoning* and its esoteric implications. Placing work in he Newlyn gallery would automatically generate a particular kind of audience, who would appear through a kind of evocation, in response to an advertised programme of events I wondered if it would be possible to orchestrate a new kind of summoning, to attract a different kind of audience for the work.

In this context, the Internet and television would appear to be creatively redundant representing a kind of terminus or the end of endeavour. Both theatrical and exhibition spaces however are dynamic, allowing the audience access at a nodal point or junction in reality, in which they might discover an affinity with the work, intersecting the narratives of their own lives with those on display. The Newlyn show could provide, I hoped, an opportunity to experiment with memory and imagination in what den Oudsten describes, in the Introduction to *space.time.narrative* (2011), as a critical alliance between objects and their messages, grounded not only in language but in the here and the now, where objects are arranged to be read as part of a series of inter-active semantic discourses. It might also offer the possibility to explore what I understood audience to mean, in the context of the research.

The challenge of readability and what this meant for my own practice at that time, defined my first thoughts about a possible way to proceed. I wanted, I told Blair Todd, to build a kind of reading nook, to encourage visitors to dwell with the work in the space, to give it the kind of attention that they might give to contemporary fiction, written for the page.

The Adventure of English (the biography of a language)
– Melvyn Bragg

So when I find it difficult to fall asleep I listen to the radio, speech radio, usually radio 4 and often Melvyn Bragg's In Our Time. Words have always fascinated and comforted me. Even when I was tiny I used to fall asleep repeating rhyming words to myself and I guess Melvyn is just part of a more grown-up version of that ritual.

In this book, *The Adventure of English*, the Cornishman, John Trevisa, who lived in the 14th century and who was alive at the same time as Geoffrey Chaucer, only gets a couple of mentions. My work in the Newlyn gallery next week (19th - 23rd November) is an attempt to imagine Trevisa's world, beyond the little we know about him that could be described as 'facts', to explore relationships between fact and fiction and to reassess his place in Cornish culture. I would be interested to know what you think of it, and about your own sayings, charms and good luck rituals.

Please return the book to me in the Lower Gallery anytime between 10 and 5 from Tuesday 19th – Saturday 23rd of November.

Thank- you!

(Left in a fish and chip shop)

Here the work would function as the contents of an exploded or open book, with contents, like short stories, displayed on the walls and installed on shelving. An interactive e-book version of the room's contents could simultaneously be accessed via an iPad. The e-book would be structured by the scanned pages of a physical field notebook, which I had kept throughout the *Trevisa Project*, and include animated images, texts and sound-files. The field notebook itself would also be on display as an object, but inaccessible, inside a glass cabinet. This would necessitate a kind of collision between den Oudsten's idea of the 'auratic word' and 'auratic artefact' (2), setting up what I hoped would be a semantic discourse between the history and fiction of the event.

I knew I was as guilty as anyone else of wandering into a gallery and glancing at the work for seconds only before moving on, whereas libraries are places where I have spent a lot of time, because of, or sometimes in spite of, their contents, and I had noticed other people doing the same. So I wondered what would happen if I constructed a provisional, liminal or hybrid space where I might attempt to fuse elements of the gallery with elements of theatre, the museum and the library. The panic for me arrived as I realised that I could not script this, that I would have to improvise and consequently take on creative risk and the real possibility of public failure.

Blair Todd was encouraging. He told me that there was a group of older women who met in the gallery for coffee every afternoon and rarely looked at any the work on display. So, weeks before the residency I wandered repeatedly around the centre of Newlyn and made a note of possible places to abandon books. My first idea, to construct a kind of micro-library as a kind of promenade performance, was looking unlikely to happen. Instead, I was increasingly drawn to the simpler idea of leaving books in strategic locations, to fend for themselves. The books I decided, to function as auratic artefacts, had to be genuinely connected to me emotionally and intellectually to the *Trevisa Project*. They could not, for example, just be random acquisitions from charity shops. I selected eight books, wrapped them individually inside waterproof zip-lock folders with a leaflet from the gallery advertising *transition* and a short narrative that I hoped might serve as a hook, what den Oudsten refers to as 'a propelling tale' (2011:4), engaging the attention of the reader and encouraging them to read and then return the book to me later in the gallery. Ten days before the start of the residency I set out with this collection, leaving some books discretely in a pub or pasty shop amongst other reading material, or out in the open on a bench near the beach. Other locations required permission and a conversation with the owner of a café or the hairdressers, for example, about my intentions for the project. Everyone I spoke to was encouragingly interested, but I realised that these people were not sadly my target audience, as they worked during gallery opening hours. My targets were their clients with whom I had not had any kind of conversation.

Measuring the World **- Daniel Kehlmann**

I have a confession. I have not actually read this book – at least not all the way through. I bought it when I was living in New Zealand because I am interested in creative non-fiction, particularly imaginative responses to lives lived long ago. The project I am working on in the Newlyn Gallery next week is trying to make a kind of visual equivalent to creative non-fiction. So I should have enjoyed this book. But I did not get much beyond the first fifty pages or so. I couldn't make myself care. Maybe because it is about European culture and I was living then very far away from all of that. Maybe I just don't believe that it is possible to measure the world. Maybe I was just being lazy. I would be interested to know what you made of it.

Please return the book to me in the Lower Gallery anytime between 10 and 5 from Tuesday 19th – Saturday 23rd of November.

Thank-you!

(Abandoned like a baby on the steps of the Mission to Seaman)

The Sea Kingdoms (the story of Celtic Britain and Ireland) **– Alistair Moffat**

This summer it was the turn of Penryn to host the annual Cornish Gorsedd. I stood at the perimeter of Glasney field and watched the procession of bards as they made their way through College Ope in their sky-blue robes. It had been threatening to rain, but the weather held while they sat in a circle and listened to speeches in Cornish and English. One of my daughter's friends was part of the troupe of children who danced in the circle, with flowers in their hair. I remembered my own headband, wrapped around with lily of the valley, as I had taken part in Flora Day as a slightly younger child. But there was for me a peculiar sense of feeling simultaneously connected with and disconnected from the Gorsedd ceremony.

I was born in Cornwall and had danced in the Furry Dance. I now live and work in the Duchy. My youngest child attends a local school and claims that the Cornish landscape makes her heart beat faster. But do we belong here? We are not descended from an old Cornish family. DNA testing would probably reveal via my North West, Irish and Scottish roots that I am a blend of Celt and Viking. But were all the bards in the Gorsedd ceremony part of old Cornish families, tribally connected with this place? It made me wonder, not for the first time, what it meant to be Cornish.

When I tried to find out about the origins of the Gorsedd, I was more than a little surprised. It appears – as this book explains – that it was entirely invented by a rattleskull genius named Iolo Morganwg, who also devised the regalia, bardic symbols and made up a 'runic' alphabet.

Next week in the Newlyn Gallery (19th -23rd) I will be making work about a Cornishman called John Trevisa. Please return this book to me then and if you like, we can have a chat about what you think it means to be Cornish,

Thank you!

(left in a café)

At this point I think that it is worth mentioning that not a single book came back to me.

The show was well attended with several people returning repeatedly throughout the week to see how the work was progressing. As each new visitor entered the space, I looked up to see what they were carrying, but no-one was carrying a book.

den Oudsten (2011) describes the post-spectacular stage as a narrative environment that is concerned with more than spectacle. It claims 'a withdrawn position' from which narratives that are normally hidden, veiled or concealed inside process, become instead the focus of attention (4). In this context the exhibition becomes more about the dialogical potential between objects than about the unique narrative of the individual object, to allow ' an analysis of the exhibition as a stage with a dramatic charge, and, conversely an analysis of the theatre stage as a place with the potential to exhibit' (4). His use of the word *skene*, the backstage in classical theatre that stored costumes and supported the painted panels of the scenery, as the refuge out of which the dynamics of the performances are driven, resonates with my own idea of *anecdota*, or the secret history of unpublished things, as strategies to unveil or sound out the black boxed elements of creative process. Both *skene* and *anecdota* are articulated by and made visible through process. They are both, like the stage and the gallery, 'narrative environments' (4).

Exposed in the lower gallery at Newlyn I began to weave myself a shelter, a metaphoric intellectual refuge. I had spent three days leading up to the project in my garden, soaking bundles of willow inside long perforated plastic tubes through which I had left a hosepipe running. This willow had come from the Somerset levels and was from the last harvest before the great floods that had returned Muchelney to an island village. I had never worked with willow before but was fascinated by its lightness and strength. I knew that it was a material that would have been familiar to Trevisa. I hoped that there would be someone amongst the gallery visitors who would know more about willow and the way to work it than I did. I had talked to people working in the gallery space before but was always, throughout those conversations, in the position of someone with little expertise being informed by a technical expert.

Colour – travels through the paintbox – Victoria Finlay

There was once only one word for all the dark colours in our land. It was the Old Norse word bla – it could mean black or dark grey or dark blue or dark brown – they were all bla. New words to describe things, like those introduced in the 14th century into the English Language by the Cornishman John Trevisa, enriched our vocabulary and, in a sense, made our world more precise, richer, more colourful. Before medieval translators like Trevisa, who translated classical texts into English, unless you were privileged enough to have had a classical education and were fluent in Greek and Latin, you would not have had the words to express complex ideas. You could have wondered what time of day it was, but not what time itself might be. Thanks to Trevisa, we now have the ability to philosophise in our native tongue.

I particularly like the phrase Trevisa invented to describe the right temperature for a plague remedy. Luke-warm. Not hot. Not cold. A particular kind of warmth. Luke-warm. A doublet that paired the English 'warm' with the Latin word for sunlight. To find out more about Trevisa, or to tell me about your own invented words, return this book to me in the Newlyn Gallery next week between the 19th and the 23rd of November, any time between 10 and 5.

Thank-you!

(Left on a bench overlooking the sea)

One or two artists had been reluctant to talk to me at all, as if they resented being interrupted. Willow felt humble, accessible, practical, domestic. I wanted to subvert the expert/novice relationship that can prevail in a gallery environment and put myself, as the artist, into a vulnerable position where my mistakes would be noticeable. In this way I hoped to encourage people to come over, to take pity on me perhaps, to offer me advice. I felt that I was more likely to elicit meaningful exchanges about the work on the walls, which was my primary objective, if the people I was talking to felt comfortable and confident and able to speak from a position of shared endeavour.

On the first day of the residency I installed work on walls, plinths and table-tops. I hung a series of small, framed drawings which related to the narrative of the Bear House, in the constellation of Ursa Major. I placed a glass-topped wooden case next to this with a small skeleton of a unicorn inside it, swaddled in raw sheep's wool. I set up a display cabinet on a table with other objects and photographs inside, made in response to the *Trevisa Project*. I also put my field notebook inside here, open at a drawing of a girl wearing a ludic votive. Next to the cabinet I placed an i-pad inside a secure frame, permanently running the e-book version of the field notebook. On the opposite wall I installed a monitor that displayed the *anchorhold* piece I had created in a motion capture studio.

Above the monitor I hung three imaginary portraits, painted in gouache, of *Jools the Solitary,* the female protagonist in the *Trevisa* narrative. At the rear of the gallery I set up my laptop, a spotlight and a floor to ceiling length of architects' drafting film, suspended from a lighting rig with cord threaded through bulldog clips. I had a small digital camera and lightweight tripod set up discretely to the side. In the middle of the space, singularly analogue and low-tech, was the damp bundle of willow, wrapped in a blanket - the potential *hide for shadows.*

The lower gallery is a space that everyone has to pass through to access the rest of the building. This was a distinct advantage. I was able to greet people and chat to them about the work even if they were only actually intending to drink coffee or visit the toilets. As I wrestled with the willow, people also spontaneously approached me to offer advice, to say how much they loved working with the material, to tell me about the willows that had been grown in the centre of Newlyn to provide material for lobster pots but had now been cleared away. It was easy to be improvisational, to stop and start and absorb interruptions into the body of the piece, so that, I gradually realised, it was becoming the performative text of the event. Everyone that I managed to engage in conversation about the *Trevisa Project* I invited to stand behind the drafting film, back projected in silhouette and be recorded as they tried to remember how to make a shadow bird with their hands. The anonymous particularity of these shadow portraits made gallery visitors feel safe and uninhibited. The activity was unthreatening and gender neutral. It travelled lightly across ages and cultures. It allowed me to fold the audience gently inside the work as they articulated their particular poetics of uncertainty.

***Islands of Excellence* – Peter Biggs**

On the face of it this looks to be a fairly dull book. How could a collection of essays by a person who is – as self-deprecating New Zealanders are fond of saying - World Famous in New Zealand – be remotely relevant to us living here on the other side of the world?

The essay that sticks in my mind, though, is the speech that was given at a graduation ceremony at Victoria University – how do you know that you have put your ladder up against the right wall? I think that kind of question is probably one we have all asked ourselves. So much of our lives, in spite of all our hopes and dreams, plans and ambitions just.. happen... as a series of accidents. Sometimes we are lucky and find ourselves in the right place at the right time. Sometimes it is the other way about.

When I was a school I was not encouraged to be an artist. This was not because I had no aptitude for art, but because my school had a curriculum focussed towards 'academic' subjects. If we were capable of studying 3 sciences, Latin, History and Modern Languages then that is what we had to do, which left no room in the timetable for Art as an examination subject.

The problem for me was that being in the Art Room was the only place I felt at home. Increasingly, I felt as though my teachers had put my ladder up against the wrong wall, and were doing their best to make me, reluctantly, climb it.
It took a long time for me to find a ladder that was propped against a wall that felt right. Partly this came about through social changes that expanded the type of lives routinely imagined for girls. Partly it came about through advances in digital technologies – which expanded how we make art and what we consider to be art. My own creative practice now includes all the subjects I had studied at school, including writing and historical research, but also other things like work produced in a motion capture studio, animated e-books, sound recording, and performance, as well as more traditional image and object making. If you would to know more about it, please return this book to me in the Newlyn Gallery next week between 19th and 23rd November, where I would be interested to find out about any ladders you might have climbed and the walls they were leaning against.

Thank-you!

(left in the gallery coffee shop)

At the end of the week I animated a series of these portraits, the shadows of all the people who had passed through the space that week, as an aggregated portrait, set to a sound track of the dawn chorus over Glasney and back projected behind the same screen. It was by then possible to crawl inside the willow hide for shadow birds and view the animation through an aperture.
Some unexpected occurrences:

- One of the Ursa Major drawings is based on a diagram that illustrates the steps of the tango. A middle-aged couple was immediately attracted to it. They had just started tango lessons. They asked me if I would like to see them dance and did so, spontaneously in the middle of the gallery. It was beautiful.

- One of the artists in the upper gallery came down to hear my gallery talk at the end of the week. He noticed a box that had previously contained a pair of my barefoot running shoes, which I had used to transport smaller bits and pieces from home. He remained convinced it was another of my fictionalised artefacts, in spite of my protests.

- A doctor, newly retired, was fascinated by the struggle that some people demonstrated when trying to remember how to make shadow birds. He said that it could be used as part of a diagnosis for handedness, or possibly early onset dementia. Three elderly women, to whom I recounted this story, begged me to school them in the business of making shadow birds so that they could ' pass the test for Alzheimer's' next time they visited the doctor's.

- Some gallery visitors did not immediately realise that I had painted the gouache portraits myself. They had assumed they were found objects. One man asked why I was 'bothering with all that other stuff' when I could paint like that?

- An elegant Japanese woman told me that she had woken up in London that morning with a strong desire to have a painting of the sea on her bedroom wall. She had jumped on a train to Penzance with the express desire to purchase a beautiful image of the sea. She had spent many hours travelling and had many thousands at her disposal. Did I paint the sea? Did I have a painting to sell to her? I don't, sadly, and I didn't.

The Light Unlocked - (eds.)
Kevin Crossley-Holland and Lawrence Sail

The sun damage on the cover of this book
makes me smile
– as if the light was trying to unlock it.
It is now not long till Christmas – a ceremony
I am not really sure about. But I like this book
because it is a good mix of different responses
to winter and the festive season – not just
Christian ones. I think the poems that move me
the most are the ones that describe the natural
world at this time of year.

A few years ago, I moved back to Cornwall
after many years living away from the county,
to rent an old farm house. It was a very snowy
that first winter which I found charming and,
entirely cut off for a few days, alarming. What
amazed me though was what appeared to me
to be a miraculous butterfly, fluttering brightly
against the white square of the window that
framed the snowy garden, on Christmas Eve.

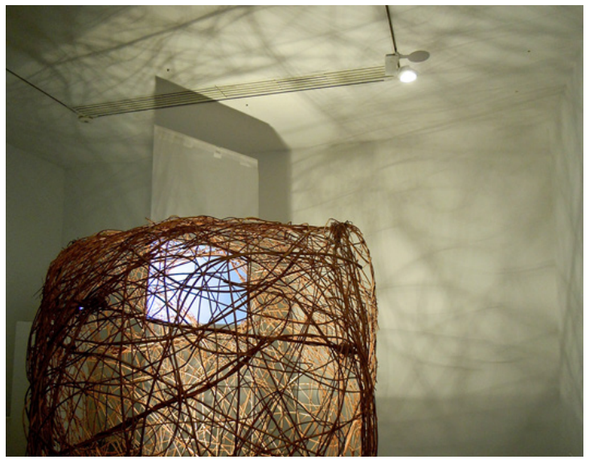
VAL DIGGLE: A POETICS OF UNCERTAINTY

There is a poem in this book
that describes over-wintering
tortoiseshells, their minutely frail legs
clinging on in dark corners, and the
spark that passes between them that
is hope or something else - a kind of
collective faith in nature, that one day it
will be Spring.

My work in the Newlyn Gallery is trying
to express a poetics of uncertainty,
which is I think, a state which many of
us, in an uncertain world, have to learn
to live in. Please return the book to me
in the Lower Gallery anytime between
10 and 5 from Tuesday 19th – Saturday
23rd of November and perhaps you
could show me which of these poems
you have most enjoyed

Thank- you!

Left in a hairdresser's



VAL DIGGLE: A POETICS OF UNCERTAINTY

ANECDOTA NUMBER EIGHT : *ANECHOIC BIRDS*

So it began.... it is very difficult to say where and when things begin. I remember I was cold and tired with walking and I was looking for somewhere to be still, for some kind of thinking space. And so I went, cautiously, into a church at the edge of Dartmoor. The door creaked dramatically as I opened it, then, with an echoing clang behind me, it shut out the winter. The building was empty of people but full of something else – the weight of silence, possibly. I sat down in a pew, discretely, near the back of the building, trying not to draw too much attention, in spite of the emptiness. It was so quiet I could hear my own breathing, see the cloud of my breath soften the edges of myself. Although I think I must have been the only person there in the building, and certainly saw no one else, it took a while for the tension in my shoulders to ease, to shed my peculiar self-consciousness and the odd feeling of being watched. As I sat I slowly settled, felt my heart beat more slowly and became aware of deep, bone deep, exhaustion.

And I might have drifted off to sleep or, at any rate, was lost for a few moments meditatively in thoughtless thought until, suddenly, I was startled by a loud rattle against one of the windows. I glanced quickly up, my heart in my throat, in time to see a huge black bird, a fluttering shadow of a bird – a rook possibly? - rattling its beak against the glass as if trying to get inside, like it too wanted access to some kind of thinking space.

I don't often venture inside churches on my own. But a few years later, I found myself on the Lizard peninsula, in Cornwall. I had heard that in St Winwaloe, the Church of the Storms, crouched against the rocks on the edge of the sands in Church Cove, there are medieval paintings of the apostles on wooden screens, contemporary with Glasney College.

The screens made into doors were the same as I remembered. The figures had the same identikit features, as if they were actually multiple representations of the same individual. If they dated from the fourteenth century, there must have been quite a fashion then for wearing a beard without a moustache. But the screens were not as unique as I had first thought. They were typical of others in the area. I have since discovered that there are more painted screens in the immediate vicinity of Glasney, at Mawnan and Budock, which are so similar that they could have been painted by the same hand.

I had hoped that these paintings might help me imagine what costumes people might have worn whilst witnessing and performing the *Ordinalia*. But when I discovered the images, on the base of what looked like a pair of old doors, I was disappointed because somebody had obviously, and very inexpertly, tried to retouch them. The figures were crude, cartoon like, with no subtlety in their marks and had identically rendered faces, flat beards and exaggerated eyes. The paint looked modern, perhaps plastic, the pigment chemical.

This time the church was not empty, there was a vicar standing in the one little central aisle, waiting, he told me, for a bride-to-be, to rehearse her wedding. The groom-to-be was outside in the small graveyard, perched on a wall. The bride-to-be was late but not contactable because, as the vicar explained, there was no phone signal on that part of the coast, which ironically is less than a mile from an old Marconi wireless station. People, he remarked, testily, used to be better at communicating in spite of all our new technologies. It didn't look as if it was going to end well. There was a lot of glancing at watches and sighing. The vicar and I continued to chat. The church had been there forever, possibly since the 11th century, possibly before, the records are hazy, he said. But in recent years in stormy weather when the tide was running high, it had flooded more than once. It kept the ghost of the floodings as a miasma, in the air of general mustiness, the damp and peeling paintwork on the outer walls. The piano was draped in a polythene sheet and the fire extinguishers were also wrapped, like a Tate boileroom exhibit, in plastic. So it was not, at least initially, those screen paintings that were inspirational.

It was a scrap of paper pinned to the church door, prudently laminated, which said *please keep door closed to prevent birds entering and being trapped inside*, printed in gothic font. So suddenly once again I was disturbed by a bird, this time the idea of a bird, a bird that came flapping wildly in panic, its wings beating so close to me that I could feel the weight of disturbed air thrumming against my eardrum. But in this vision the disturbance was empty of sound.

I decided then that I needed to know what it would have been like, back in the 14th century, to hear birds trapped inside the collegiate church at Glasney, because surely birds were equally likely to have been trapped then and surely there was something historical and continuous about birdsong that would not have changed over the centuries? In the back of my mind were other ideas I had come across in the past – Bede's story in the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (731 CE) of the sparrow that flies out of the winter gloom into the mead-hall, dazed and confused by the bright feasting for a few seconds, before flying out through another door into winter again, as a metaphor for life's mystery and brevity. I also half-remembered a TV documentary (*The Story Of India* January 5th 2009) about a remote Brahmin community that handed down, orally from father to son, complex mantras that obeyed rules but had no meaning, that were said to be ancient, pre-linguistic and more akin to the rhythms and cadences of birdsong, than to human speech.

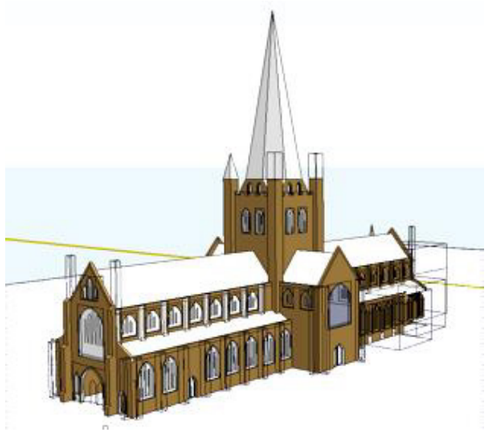
There is a particular technological process that I had also heard about, something called virtual acoustic mapping, where you have to use an anechoic chamber - a perfectly dead and echoless space – together with line drawings of a building, which, when translated into digital data, filter recorded sound and anticipate what the acoustic potential of a building might be when planning it. Architects use this kind of software when designing auditoria. I also knew that it was possible retrospectively to create how sound might have behaved in a historical building that no longer existed, if you had access to line drawings of it. Dr Damian Murphy, for example, at the University of York, is conducting research into enhancing heritage experience by providing an immersive soundscape, replicating that which would have been happening inside the ruin of a castle or cathedral when it was intact (EPRC 2016). Other researchers are investigating the sonic impact of Stonehenge.

Long before the continuous drone of traffic on the by-pass polluted the sound signature of the site, Thomas Hardy, in *Tess of the d'Urbevilles* (1891) describes the peculiar deep booming resonance of the wind through the stones standing in their isolated position on Salisbury Plain. This literary observation, the scientific reliability of which can never really be established, was enough to prompt Dr Rupert Till (bradshawfoundation.com 2011) to investigate the site aurally, rather than exclusively visually, and to visit a full-size Disney-esque concrete reconstruction of the stones, in Washington State, USA. Then, using virtual acoustic mapping to analyse a digital model of Stonehenge, he discovered that simple Neolithic percussive instruments could be tuned to the space and effectively make the stones sing.

But unfortunately, for me to get access to an anechoic chamber proved to be as hard and unlikely as the raven getting access to the church once the door had closed.

fig 15: Sean Broderick's 3D visualisation of Glasney College, 2013

Early in this research (2012) I had been in conversation with Sean Broderick, who was then a talented undergraduate in digital design at the University of Plymouth, working on visual reconstructions of the Glasney site for his final project. He had posted online meticulously rendered images of Glasney College, which provided compelling illustrations of what the building might have looked like in the medieval period. I had also been in conversation with Aaron Carter, who had worked with the Glasney building, using information about its footprint uncovered during the 2003 excavations of the site by the University of Exeter.



Carter's 3D model, which comprised part of his final year show at Falmouth University, is currently on display at Penryn museum, alongside various chunks of granite, purporting to be pieces of Glasney, that have been discovered in local gardens and donated to the museum over the years. He kindly sent me a link to the initial SketchUp drawings for this work, explaining that he had consulted local historians to get more information about what the building looked like when it was intact. They had advised him to look at Exeter Cathedral and also the church at Ottery St Mary, because, they said, Glasney, Exeter and Ottery St Mary were all likely to have been supervised by the same architect.

Fig16: Glasney College, Aaron Carter, 2009

One obvious difference between Broderick's and Carter's visualisations, that of the omission or the inclusion of a spire, intrigued me. There are no extant images of Glasney, apart from a small, schematic sketch of a steepled building in the centre of a fortified site, on a map produced by Leland in the sixteenth century. In this sketch, Leland describes the site as circular rather than the square precinct currently defined by the fragments of medieval walling that remain in situ, so it is likely that the image is generic and symbolic rather than based on direct observational information.

As the physical footprint of the building that was uncovered when the site was excavated is, therefore, the only reliable evidence for the building's scale in two dimensions, all its three dimensional features, including the spire, have ultimately to be speculative. In personal communication by email (2012) Aaron Carter explained that many buildings of the period were originally built with spires that collapsed, leaving a stubby replacement or a tower. Although Exeter Cathedral does not have a spire and the parish church at Ottery St Mary has only a very small one, the spire on Carter's model is tall and elegant, and its inclusion in the museum display adds weight and credibility to an image of Glasney College, as a physical structure, that has to be largely conjectural.

The uncertainty provoked by these visualisations increased when I talked to Dr David Prior, sound artist, musician and composer, about my intention to create a piece of work that would attempt to replicate the sound of birds trapped inside Glasney College, using virtual acoustic mapping. It would be a long and complicated business to do that, assuming that it was even possible to access the technology, he counselled. Then so much would have to be invented because the quality of sound would have been altered, not just by the physical dimensions of the space, but also by the materials used in the interior, by the proportion of wood to stonework and by other items that might be stored there. Then, after all that, the conditions for listening to the finished sound file would also impact on how it was perceived, unless it was always listened to privately, using headphones. More trouble than it's worth, he concluded.

But the idea for the work, which had begun with a phenomenological engagement with the Glasney site and other sacred spaces, would not let me be. I decided, in the spirit of constructing a poetics of uncertainty, to shift my attention slightly from the technology itself, which seemed then to be out of my reach, to what the technology inferred. I decided that I would create a fiction, using technology, about a similar concept, which used ambient sound to tell a story that conflated different moments in time.

My digital camera had the ability to record video footage, albeit at very low resolution. One evening at dusk, I stood in a field near the Glasney site, where I had noticed that there was a particular tree where starlings regularly, at that time of year, swooped in a flock to congregate as the sun went down. That evening as the birds arrived, I held my camera over my head as they flew in their dozens above me, cawing in flight and more raucously and belligerently once settled in the tree, staking their claim to the roost. Later I transferred the file to iMovie on my laptop. I began to play with the idea of birds flying through a volume of thickened air that was a metaphysical remnant, a kind of invisible, ghost building of the medieval College. As they entered this space their flight was impeded, and, once edited in slow motion, the cry of the birds also slowed down and was eerily distorted. Serendipitously, right at the end of filming, a full moon slipped out from behind a cloud. Only subsequently did I discover that the recording had taken place on the night of a blue moon.

At the *Fascinate* Conference held at Falmouth University in 2013, which celebrated work that combined Art and Technology, I installed *anechoic birds* alongside other work from the *Trevisa Project*, projecting it on an end wall and making a pair of headphones available to listen to the piece privately. I had installed other sound works in the same space and so the headphones were essential.

The figures on the screens, in the literature about the church, were supposed to represent the apostles. There were eight here in all, four on each door, out of a possible twelve, so it looked like one of the screens at St Winwaloe might be missing. And as I looked, for the first time, more closely, to really pay them some attention, something started to unsettle me. There were seven identikit figures, so crudely painted and repainted that their iconography was obscure. Was that a pilgrim staff and a cockleshell on the hat and purse of the figure on the left? Did that make him James, son of Zebedee? But the really troubling figure was the one on the right. He had no facial hair at all and was not dark, but redheaded. Who was he supposed to be? A teenaged doubting Thomas?

The starlings, flying and calling in slow motion underscored my narration that described the process of virtual acoustic mapping and provided an account of what was being witnessed. The grainy film functioned, not as a showcase for the technology, but as an illustration of a fiction. It was my intention that the narrative should sound plausible but the film should be perplexingly possible and impossible by turns, to encourage audiences to wonder what to doubt and what to trust and eventually, hopefully, to surrender to uncertainty.

In the *Origo Mundi*, the first of the three play cycles in the *Ordinalia*, the symbol of a tree runs through it. The play is unusually structured by a Christian apocryphal tale about the tree that supplied the wood on which Christ was crucified, which I had first encountered as an undergraduate in Wales when reading the *Dream of the Rood* in Old English. Adam's son Seth is instrumental in the Cornish version. He travels back to the Garden of Eden to try to obtain a cure for his dying father, but is not allowed in. The cherub, guarding the entrance to Eden, lets him peer three times through the gates at the old Tree of Knowledge that is withered and dying, like Adam, with whom its fate is inextricably linked. Seth glimpses the old tree, then he sees the serpent monstrous and terrifying and, lastly on the third occasion he sees a tiny Christ child in the topmost branches. Seth is then given three apple seeds from the tree to place in the mouth of his dead father. These subsequently sprout and via Moses and David grow into a tree which carpenters attempt, unsuccessfully, to use as the roof beam for the temple of Solomon and, eventually after several miraculous episodes, it becomes a bridge over the river Cedron and finally in the *Passio Domini*, the second play in the cycle, it becomes the cross on which Christ is crucified.

The magical properties of the tree, such as its power to heal, to persist and transform across the centuries, contrast with the prosaic remarks of the carpenters in the *Ordinalia*, who can only appreciate it for its material qualities and its potential usefulness for a building project due to its remarkable size and strength. They also, comically, complain about its weight and the effort involved in carrying it around. In the *Origo Mundi* the tree is essential to its structure, as Jane Bakere (2003) points out, but it is also a tacit character. When it is fully grown, David remarks that it was planted by God himself, that it had originally been three but now was one and, according to Rob Barrett, (medievalecocriticsm.blogspot.co.uk May 18th 2015) is now 'reminiscent of *Piers Plowman's* 'plante of pees' ' which has a similarly incarnational quality, representing divine will. The tree full of roosting starlings in the piece that came to be called *anechoic birds* (vimeo.com/131208666) has implicitly grown inside the nave of the invisible College building, and is a nod to the structuring device of the tree motif in the Cornish drama.

Curiously, this eighth figure appeared to be holding a small, fierce black creature in his hand. In spite of his beardlessness, judging from his long, heavy facial features the figure is, I would argue, masculine. His right hand is swathed in what could be some kind of gauntlet to protect him from the creature's teeth. But the left hand is uncovered and holding what could be a broom or possibly a scourge. What apostle is associated with such iconography? Bartholomew? But why is he so obviously different from his other identikit team mates? I was reminded a little of Piero della Francesca's Michael holding one of the horns on the decapitated head of a serpent. In the painting, completed by 1469, the creature is open-jawed and black. Michael is standing impassively, a bloody sword in his right hand, a pair of stylish red boots firmly planted on the creature's still writhing body. There is something, too, about the gaze of the angel, off to his left and his mass of red curls, which is an echo of the screen painting in St Winwaloe.

There are no obvious wings on the Winwaloe screen figure. But could he nevertheless be angelic? Amongst the angelic hierarchies are the Powers, warrior angels defending humanity from demons and darkness, placing evil spirits in detention. They are the keepers of history, the bearers of conscience and work to distribute evenly power amongst individuals in the world. I really wanted this enigmatic figure to be a keeper of history but, in spite of restraining a demonic creature he was not entirely angelic, nor part of series of portraits of apostles. So who or what did he represent? In the end, this simple portrait gave me a taste of my own medicine. I had to experience the frustration inherent in uncertainty and ultimately learn to recognise it as a positive value.

Anechoic Birds was not cynically intended to deceive, but was produced after research into conventional digital and analogue reconstructions of the Glasney site had revealed their inconsistencies and limitations. The rough, low-tech, product made obvious the unlikeliness of the narrative. Graphically or sonically sophisticated digital rendering, which might seduce a viewer into accepting unquestioningly that what they were viewing was somehow factual, was not available to me. My intention, pragmatically, became instead to prompt an audience to reconsider, not only the implausibility of the tale, but also their own relationship to the past, to personal and cultural histories and to technologies which might function as surrogates for personal acts of remembering beyond the remembering body.

ANECDOTA NUMBER NINE: *WRECCUM MARIS*

On the cliff tops to the west of Porthleven lie the *Wrestling Fields*, marked by a memorial to commemorate unnamed sailors who were drowned off the Lizard, their bodies wrestled along the foreshore and up steep cliffs to be buried in mass graves along the headland. When I discovered this location by chance, walking along the coastal path, I thought that I had found the starting point for a new body of work that would follow on after the *Trevisa Project*. But contemporary news reports of drowning and desperation, as refugees tried to escape in frail craft from Syria, and other war torn areas, to Europe, compelled me to find out more. Although initially it felt like a distraction, I also felt that there was a resonance here between historic and contemporary drownings. There was an unignorable resonance, for example, between older attitudes to salvage and the bounty of spilled cargo and our own mixed attitudes to the migrant crisis, as we wrestle with conflicting ideas and emotions - self-interest, greed, compassion and what it means to be European. A sense of my own place as artist-scholar also emerged, positioning me as a *wrecker* methodologically in my research community.

I was beguiled by the idea of the *wrestling fields,* and curious to find out more about them, and I was not surprised to learn about the numbers of casualties from seafaring in that area, as I had always thought that the seas around Cornwall were particularly dangerous. But, according to Pearce (2010), maritime records for the period 1700-1860 show that the Cornish coast was not any more prone to shipwrecks than any other stretch of coastline around Britain. The majority of wrecks in fact occurred in the east, where the sea-lanes were busier.

I'd forgotten my passport
My password
Why I'd passed out
Have you ever fallen in the sea fully clothed?
Remember the weight of water
As you dragged yourself landward
The staggering surf?
I arrive fresh from the ocean
My ears full of sand and false promises
My throat salty with mouthing
Fictions of Britishness
Washed up on England's edge
Beached below the green wedge
Of the wrestling fields

I have been lured by a light
Tied to the tail of a donkey
By the lights of the town shining
On wet pavements, where I seek
Refuge and hot coffee for I am
Eager and terrified and legion
I am your brother your sister
Your son, your daughter, you
When you were younger, bolder, stronger
When you still had ambition
I am your mission to just imagine
All the people living life in peace
Carry my body from the beach up the track
With the sun on your back
To the wrestling fields
Amongst tansy and sheep dag and furze
Give me your word, Karensa, for love

The most treacherous spot of all was off the Kent coast, on the Goodwin Sands. But there is nonetheless a persistent myth that conflates riptides, rocks, sea-frets and wrecking with Cornwall, in the popular imagination. I had a hunch that it might be useful to pay more attention to the idea of wrecking as a social construct, in the context of Cornish cultural identity, to understand more about its formation and relevance to the *Trevisa Project*, but also to gain some kind of insight into my own creative process.

Pearce argues that while there is little archival evidence to support the popular idea of wrecking, meaning luring ships onto rocks using false lights, there were levels of violence associated with some other forms of wrecking activity, and that the involvement of miners – known colloquially as *tinners* – in this activity is indisputable. She cites a traditional mariner's prayer "God keep us from rocks and shelving sands. And save us from Breage and Germoe men's hands." (100) that would seem to place the *Wrestling Fields*, located only a mile or so from Breage, squarely in the centre of violent wrecking behaviour, associated with the mining communities that bordered Mount's Bay. The origin of this violence seems to be linked to the common laws of salvage, *Wreccum Maris* or *Wrecke Law*, established in Trevisa's day, whereby survivors of wrecks retained the cargo but *dead wrecks*, where there were no survivors, could be salvaged by anyone. But Pearce records how of the 115 wrecks recorded between 1738-1860 near Breage and Germoe only 10% were subject to violent attack by miners who, due to the presence of the Stannary Courts which was biased towards protecting their rights and took precedence over Common Law, felt themselves to be immune from prosecution.

So for every tale of murderous tinners despatching bodies
washed ashore and scuppering the hulls of floundering
vessels, like putting an injured animal out of its misery,
there are other tales of heroism where communities
put their own lives at risk to save the lives of others.
Pearce describes how by the 19th century, the 'over-
specialisation on mining and its ancillary businesses' (48-49)
to sustain local economies led to profound economic decline,
as shoals of pilchards were over-fished and crops failed, hit by a
similar kind of potato blight to that which had affected Ireland. In this
context, against a backdrop of extreme poverty and the imminent threat
of starvation, goods washed ashore were considered to be a providential
godsend and the practice of wrecking more akin to beachcombing or
gleaning than to murder.

The reality of Cornish wrecking then is layered and complex. The
ruling elites who owned the shipping companies and profited
from overseas trade were keen to ensure that the right of
salvage, and associated insurance claims, remained theirs.
The practice of gathering goods washed ashore had been
established in law since the medieval period, where local landowners
had the right to profit from the foreshore, and Pearce describes how
there were frequent local disputes over these rights. So wrecking behaviours were
not entirely confined to the labouring classes. But a picture of extreme behaviour,
of the violent lawlessness of Cornish wreckers, was whipped up in popular literature,
by Defoe (1724) and others, and in newspaper reports, using sensational language (*rapacious hoards, barbarians, ferocious multitudes*), to the point of moral panic in the 18th century.

We walked for months barefoot over the winter mountains
They had ripped the boots from our children's tender feet
We waded the river where shards of ice floated like fragments
Of sky trapped in a window shattered by shrapnel in our
Old apartment block
We did not stop to dry our clothes
We walked to the shoreline, the grey waves dissembling
The last unscaleable wall of our prison
But the trafficker said

I trade you a fiction of freedom
Written on water, scratched on a
window
Scribbled on sand
I trade you a smudge on the horizon
This fake life-jacket
For your life savings

But beyond what we had imagined the wall of our prison to be
Was another, an invisible wall, a line on a sea chart
Purple as the hyacinth lips of my hypothermic baby
His eyes fragments of trapped sky
Like ice in the rivers we had crossed
And continued to walk without stopping
To dry our clothes

Gwithian women took pity
Washed brine from our blankets
With their own cracked fingers
Pegged our shirts to dry in the sun
Till a band of tinners from Camborne
Stole them from the line, every one
Carry our bodies to the wrestling fields
Lay us down in the mud, lay us down in the rain
Where Coppinger leaps to the saddle
Stuffed with silk from the Spanish Main
Holes up in a farm on the headland
Scribes his signature on a window pane
While we set up camps in a jungle
And bomb the refugees
We are pirates, privateers and smugglers
who profit from people (not from round here)
in the struggle for authority

So interestingly, the wreckers, as a cultural construct, never attain the romantic associations of other independent law-breakers on the fringes of society, such as the poacher or highwayman, even though wrecking activity is characterised in some sources as a by-product of resourcefulness, by a kind of anarchic independence, and not without humour. Examples of more benign behaviours are in the ubiquitous tale of the Cornish parson who locks his congregation in the church when they receive news of a wrecked ship one Sunday, while he removes his cassock 'so we can all start fair'. Another newspaper report from 1817 describes how the kindly efforts of the inhabitants of Gwithian to wash and dry the clothes of shipwrecked sailors they had rescued, were scuppered by the arrival of a band of tinners from Camborne who stole the clothing from the lines.

Disconnected from major population centres there must, according to Pearce, have been a complex network that supported the auctioning of goods that were retrieved from the sea. Newspapers and diary entries of the period report how silk, cochineal, timber, nuts, copper, butter and items of clothing from wrecks were sold openly on the streets in Helston and Penzance. These items represent more than economic transaction; they are aspirational, providing a kind of portal to a life-style that could never be accessed any other way. The playwright Nick Darke (cited in Pearce 2012:114) who describes himself as a wrecker, reports how even in the 21st century, if gathered spoils are placed above the tideline, local people respect them and recognise the claim of the finder.

When talking about mythologised ideas of wrecking with a range of local people, reactions were interesting.

I had imagined most would be pleased to have the slur of murderous intent challenged and removed from the cultural imaginary of the region. Instead some were perplexed – some faintly disappointed. One interviewee works as a lifeguard for half of the year at Widemouth Bay in Bude. He talked with pride and affection about his place of birth, an old farmhouse at Spekes Mill Cove, just over the border into Devon, which has a window inscribed with the signature of *Cruel Jack Coppinger* a smuggler and privateer of legendary brutality who, legend has it, committed murder and kidnap, ruled through terror and ran a private import and export business from a stronghold on Lundy Island.

My interviewee was surprised to hear about how rumours of wrecking behaviours appear to be exaggerated because his locality is defined by them. His personal attachment to narratives of historical machismo is interesting as, when he is not working as a lifeguard in Cornwall, he volunteers for a charity that rescues drowning refugees from the Aegean - refugees who are the victims of traffickers and people smugglers. Yes the history is dark, he said, but the north coast of Devon and Cornwall breeds hard men. You had to be hard to survive. Could he admire contemporary smugglers trafficking people out of Syria? He was not sure – perhaps some were admirable in their tenacity. Some were probably doing what they thought they had to do to survive – who knows who was controlling them. But anyone who valued money more than human life was despicable. Did Coppinger fall in to that category? Probably. It's complicated.

The wreckers from Breage and from Germoe
Love to get one over the man
The lord who squandered his fortune
When things didn't go quite to plan
With a fistful of fake dispensations
To live the life that he chose
To neglect parliamentary duties
To stuff powder up his nose
To profit from industrial slaughter
To swill back contraband
Cunningly hiding in plain sight
Black smoke over the land
So scoop up the nuts on the foreshore
The iPads, the slimline TVs
We will watch it unfold on Netflix
The rest is history

Below and east of the *Wrestling Fields* is the section of beach known as Loe Bar that divides the sea from Loe Pool, the largest fresh water lake in Cornwall. Swimming off the bar is extremely dangerous; local custom has it that the sea at this point, like the river Dart, claims a life every 7 years. In 2014, for example, a New Year reveller in his twenties, on holiday from Newton Abbot, drowned in huge seas, whipped up by a storm, and was found washed ashore next day in Porthleven harbour with his neck broken. The whole of the Lizard coast at this point is particularly treacherous. But it was one particular catastrophic mass drowning of nearly 200 people on Christmas Eve in 1807 that marks a kind of turning point in the way that the dead were treated by coastal communities tasked with the disposal of their remains. HMS Anson was a naval frigate that ran aground off Loe Bar within sight of the shore but, although local people tried to assist, hardly anyone was saved. Perhaps because it was a naval vessel that had served in the Battle of Trafalgar there was a national outcry when the bodies of the dead were disposed of in the usual mass burial pit on the headland. An Act of Parliament was passed to say that everyone drowned at sea and washed ashore should be interred in consecrated ground, even if their adherence to Christianity could not be verified. The Anson Memorial on the eastern edge of the Bar mirrors the other on the *wrestling fields* to the west, and is a monument to that tragedy.

The shingle barrier that comprises Loe Bar, at a fulcrum point between the twin memorials, began to fascinate me. It effectively stops the mouth of the river Cober, that runs through Helston, to create Loe Pool, and at various times in its history, plans have been drawn up to 'cut' the bar and create a harbour for Helston. On more than one occasion, the bar has been deliberately cut to relieve flooding upstream in the town. It quickly heals itself. The beach shingle is not local to the immediate area, but drifts offshore from East Devon, 150 miles away.

The contrast between the wild, treacherous seas on one side of the Bar and the quieter waters on the other is striking. Loe Pool is an atmospheric stretch of water but it feels tranquil and benign. I had walked beside it to Porthleven more than once. So I was surprised to discover that Tennyson, visiting Cornwall in the summer of 1848, was inspired to use the pool as the location for Sir Bedivere and the dying King Arthur to relinquish the sword Excalibur to the Lady of the Lake in the *Idylls of the King*, which he published a decade later. The following lines, describing Sir Bedivere's reluctance to part with the sword, are recognisable as geographic features that resonate with this body of water as it is today:

Then, because his wound was deep,
The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
A broken chancel with a broken cross,
That stood on a dark strait of barren land:
On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
Lay a great water, *and the moon was full..*

...[Bedivere] gazed so long
That both his eyes were dazzled as he stood,
This way and that dividing the swift mind,
In act to throw: but at the last it seemed
Better to leave Excalibur concealed
There in ***the many-knotted waterflags,***
That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.

Fig. 17 Julia Margaret Cameron
c1875 *So like a shatter'd Column lay the King* [photograph]
V&A collection

Whilst Loe Bar is dramatic, the body of fresh water behind it has none of the brooding bleakness of Dozmary Pool on Bodmin, another contender for this episode in the Arthurian legend, which I initially thought would appeal more to a Victorian Gothic sensibility. But, as I struggled to keep my focus on the *Trevisa Project*, I discovered the eastern arm of the pool, pointing inland back towards Glasney, like the swollen finger of a drowned sailor. This is portion of the pool is known as Carminow Creek.

In 1375, according to Sylvia Federico (2003), when Trevisa was in thirties, a Cornish Knight named Thomas Carminow, insisted, when confronted with another knight bearing the same insignia, that he had the right to bear the heraldic design of a blue shield with a rising diagonal gold bar, saying that his family had been given the right to do so by King Arthur himself, from whom his family were descended. The case was found in his favour, though would in reality have been difficult, if not impossible, to prove. Interestingly, his castle, more properly a fortified manor house, was sited near the creek, close by Loe bar. The fortified manor of Carminow (which means 'little city'), associated with the Carminow family to whom the creek owes its name, persisted as a medieval mansion, surrounded by a moat, until in 1861, in a poor state of repair, it was demolished.

So in the years immediately before this, coinciding with Tennyson's tour of the region, the Carminow buildings could well have presented themselves as an inspirational, romantic ruin (*a broken chancel with a broken cross*), a ruin with an evocative past and historic associations with a powerful Cornish family who claimed to have Arthurian connections. In 2010, in an archaeological report prepared for the National Trust by Cornwall Council, in advance of developing land around Carminow Mill on the creek, there is reference not only to a 'sumptuous mansion' but also to a chapel on the site:

> … when Roger or his son, also called Roger, constructed their sumptuous mansion and chapel at Carminow during the reign of Henry III (1216-72) the family were in possession of a number of significant manors with their extensive lands and tenants to match.

Interestingly, Percy Bysshe Shelley, who met his own untimely end, a victim of a shipwreck in a storm, and who was probably unaware of his own Arthurian heritage, appears himself actually to be descended from Roger de Carminowe, via Roger's grand-daughter Maud Carminow, who married into the Heligan family in the 13th century

1861 was the year that Prince Albert died, and Tennyson dedicated the *Idylls of the King* to him. Several years later Tennyson commissioned Julia Margaret Cameron to illustrate a hand-written facsimile of the work photographically, in what could be considered to be the first of its kind to pair poetry and art photography in a single volume. Co-incidentally I had just returned from London where I had seen a special exhibition of Cameron's work at the V&A and had been struck by how a re-imagining of the death of Arthur, filtered through a sentimental Victorian sensibility, might nevertheless somehow confer, for its contemporary readership, the impact of a documentary artefact on to what were the products of collaborative acts of creative imagination. I thought about Wright Morris and his photo narratives that had so obsessed me at the start of this research.

To discover the connection with Tennyson and Cameron in the closing stages seemed, if not like the closing of circle, like a twist in a spiral.

Rogers, writing in 1875, describes the ultimate fate of the Carminow family seat, which bears a startling resemblance to the fate of the dispersed fragments of Glasney and their reincorporation into the vernacular buildings in the heart of Penryn
The buildings of the medieval mansion at Carminow enclosed a court 40ft square and were surrounded by a moat. Due to their irreparable condition they were demolished in 1861 and a new homestead and outbuildings erected on the site - the present farmyard corresponding with the former court. Only the N arm of the moat remains. The whole farmyard and buildings are strewn with well carved stonework of C14, C15 and C16. None of the Medieval buildings or arms of the moat survive, although incorporated in all the present buildings there are pieces of Medieval window tracery, door lintels and worked stone (231-251).

A satellite photograph of the building appears to reveal the position of the old moat

Figs 18 and 19 Google earth July 2015.
Loe Bar and Carminow creek, Cornwall

Another author, Daphne du Maurier, writing a century later, must also have been aware of the Carminow family and their lands, for in her novel *The House on the Strand* (1969), her two male protagonists experiment with a drug that allows them to experience Cornwall as it was in the fourteenth century.

Under the influence of this drug, they discover a medieval mansion and become obsessed with a beautiful woman who lives there, and who actually lived historically, called Isolde Carminow. Just as Tennyson adapted the Arthurian legend to his own purposes, in what appears to be a reanimation of chivalric ideals to please, as Poet Laureate, Queen Victoria and the Victorian establishment, Du Maurier reanimates 4th century Cornwall to suit her own time, publishing a work riddled with psychedelic episodes in the same year as the festival at Woodstock.

Because, gaoler, thou art so trusty,
I give thee now
Fekenel, all entirely
Carvenow, also *Merthyn*

(*Resurrexio Domini*, ll. 91--94).

rak the vos geyler mar len

me a re thy 'so lemyn

fekenel ol yn tyencarvenow
inwet merthyn

I was sufficiently excited by these discoveries to search for a link between the *Ordinalia*, Glasney and the Carminow dynasty; the search provided some interesting material. Gloria Betcher (1996: 445-446) uses a close reading of sections in the Glasney *Ordinalia* to suggest a date for its composition. She pays particular attention to ll.91-94 in the *Resurrexio Domini*, where Pontius Pilate gifts tracts of land to the jailer for guarding Christ so well and remarks:

> 'These three places once formed a coherent place-name group because they were all held by the Carminows, a well-known family in the county. What makes these place names particularly interesting is that they formed a coherent group only until 1395 when Johanna, the Carminow heiress, died at the age of nine. Only under the Carminows were these lands held by a single family. Following Johanna Carminow's death in 1395, the three properties, which the family had held for over a hundred years, were divided between her cousins John Trevarthian and John Arundell, husbands of the Carminow heiresses. The date when these lands were divided suggests a possible *terminus ante quem* for the cycle'--1395-96.

In the fourteenth century, the Carminows seem to be one of the most powerful families in Cornwall. But the family was not always on the right side of the law. At least two Carminows were fined for wrecking illegally at Hayle and Padstow, supporting Pearce's claim (2010) that all strata of society in Cornwall practised wrecking. Robert Carminow, an MP for Cornwall, chose to go hunting instead of attending a State opening of Parliament, and was dragged over a cliff to his death by his own hounds.

Earlier, he had been discovered, by a visiting Bishop of Exeter, to be living with a woman called Katherine, without being married to her, but instead married to a woman called Elizabeth. On that occasion he had managed to produce papers that claimed to be from the Pope, giving him, handily, papal dispensation to live as he wished. The sub-text for this story, whether it is true or not, is that the Carminow family appear to be sufficiently rich and powerful to be above the law, as well as being part of a ruling elite tasked with administering the law.

Manning (2003) describes how tracts of land associated with people sympathetic to Glasney and Penryn were gifted as rewards to good characters in the play cycle. The gift of Carminow land to reward a wicked character, as described by Betcher above, is not just an indication of the last possible date for the *Ordinalia's* completion, it is also an indication of just how little the Carminows were liked at Glasney. In 1379, Ralph Carminow had succeeded the Black Prince as Sheriff of Cornwall and by 1384 was a tax collector, a profession not high in the popularity stakes (historyofparliamentonline.org)

The likelihood of Trevisa being a scholar at Glasney while the *Ordinalia* was composed is not confirmed by this dating, but neither is it made impossible. Trevisa's own position, when writing about King Arthur in his translation of the *Polychronicon* is less than romantic. He dismisses Geoffrey of Monmouth's account as a 'maggle tale' and while accepting that Arthur existed and was probably a good King, only 'som mad men' believe that his life had supernatural episodes and that he might one day return. It would seem more useful to consider, not whether which elements of the Arthurian legends can be verified, which are mythical and which biographical, but how the elements function in the context of each retelling. Monmouth's retelling, for example, seems to retrofit the so called prophesies of Merlin to please his Anglo-Norman patrons and justify their political activity. Trevisa's translation of the Polychronicon, (c1387) was at the behest of his patron Thomas, Earl of Berkeley during the reign of an ineffectual Richard II. During this period Berkeley's power over the king was 'unparalled by any baron of the age' (Fildes 2009:180) so it is unlikely that Trevisa would want to undermine this influence by reanimating stories of supernatural deeds associated with the monarchy.

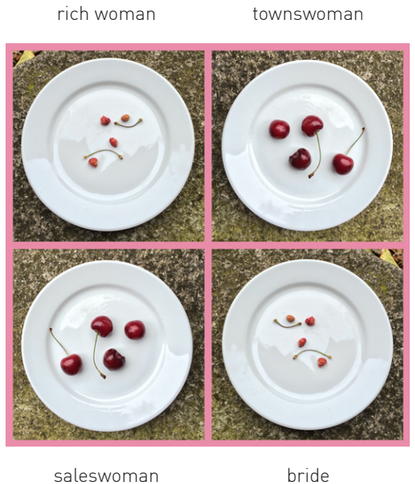
In my own retelling of narratives concerning the figure of John Trevisa and the site of Glasney College, elements of the stories come together fortuitously, like the contents of wrecked cargoes strewn along a tide-line. Like any gleaner of sea-harvest, I need to be in the right place at the right time. I need to keep a weather eye out. I need to know what I am looking for.

The joy of the search is characterised by a poetics of uncertainty; by the principle of uncertainty as a positive value within an exploration of the biographic and mythic. The architecture of (virtual) knowledge in my own time, through links, privileges tales that evolve by digression and drift, and affirms a sense of my own cultural identity as a wrecker in my research community.

A MOMENT OF RUPTURE: *POST TRANSGRESSION*

Anecdota number nine: wreccum maris was presented as part of a symposium held by the University of Exeter in June 2016, which had the theme of *transgression*. My presentation was titled *wrestling fields* and dealt with content in an experimental format. It attempted to anticipate the multi-layered voices that would comprise a 20 minute podcast recently commissioned by *Apples and Snakes* – a national organization for poetry and the spoken word.
The podcast was scheduled to be broadcast early in 2017.

Out of the twenty or so people gathered to listen to the presentation, which I had described as a *performance lecture*, only three had heard of Trevisa. One was a local historian, one was a fellow doctoral researcher, already familiar with my research, and the third was a Research and Engagement Officer who had a particular interest in promoting the teaching and learning of the Cornish language. When I asked him about the status of Trevisa's activity in the context of Cornish Nationalism he said that he was considered to be a revisionist, and his activity was proof that English was artificially constructed. Without "scribes like Trevisa" rescuing English from the brink of extinction, just as the Cornish language had been rescued, Chaucer would not have been able to produce the writing that he did, for example.



I replied that as Chaucer was also a translator and an exact contemporary of Trevisa the relationship between them must have been more complex than he implied. But he did not seem convinced. I wondered too about his evidence for considering English as a language on the verge of extinction in the 14th century. Because it was only spoken, not written, he explained. People were recording things in Latin and Norman French and not writing down English in a way that would preserve it. But there were vernacular manuscripts, I said, as old as King Alfred's translation of scholarly texts from Latin, and these enriched English vocabulary with abstract, philosophical words and phrases. He still did not seem convinced. That wasn't English he said. That was Anglo-Saxon.

It struck me later that there was something here, something obvious that my research had failed to take into account and that was the ambivalence, the adversarial slippages of categories and liminal sets of cultural beliefs that constituted the living work-in-progress that was the formation of coherent Cornish cultural identities in the 21st century. Homi Bhabha speaks of the tension in narratives around localised culture 'between the pedagogical and the performative' (2009:209) where certainties collapse and where the blind totality of ideologies runs counter to the insight of the idea. I began to wonder whether there was something inherent in Cornish, in the DNA of the language, which made it hard for me to find common ground. Although there could be no faithful transmission, no absolute line of continuity linguistically, between older and contemporary speakers of Cornish, because the language is currently being revived from a position of extinction, maybe there was something between our languages, ghostly and anciently encoded, that would make it difficult to find a way to proceed, to reimagine old binaries.

Why was Cornwall, in its struggle for self-determination, for example, intent on, to paraphrase Anderson, reiterating its hoariness not celebrating its astonishing youth (cited in Bhabha 2009:203)? Maybe the answer lay in the language itself.

It was not a perfect way to proceed but it was a start. Experimentally, I put the vocabulary that Trevisa had introduced to the English vernacular into a number of online English to Cornish translation sites. The first word I tried was *concept*. Some sites declared that there was no straight translation, others suggested the word *meddwl* 'to think' or *tybyans* that interestingly seemed to carry the twin meanings of 'idea' and 'opinion' - an idea that requires no formalised system of evidence. Next I typed in the word *intellectual*.
The nearest equivalent one site could offer was *scyens* 'science', another suggested *skiansek* 'knowledgeable'. There was also another word in the list of suggestions - *skiansogyon* meaning 'a knowledgeable man'. There was no suggested word for 'knowledgeable woman'. There did not seem to be more than four words to describe women in terms of their status or occupation and these were *rich woman, townswoman, saleswoman* and *bride*.
None of them applied to me.

Clearly more work needs to be done, but perhaps there are patterns of thought, that are now disembodied, unsounded in the hiatus between what was once living and what is now re-collected from fragments. But the fragments, it seems, must inevitably belong originally to a pre-industrial age, to have evolved subsequently and naturally during a period of intense industrialisation, shaped by the masculine pragmatics of mining, quarrying and fishing. As Cornwall is the first region in the world to undergo processes of de-industrialisation, which began as early as the beginning of the 19th century, when Cornish was still a living language, the vocabulary must also be associated with narratives of loss, sadness and decline. Cornish as a spoken language seems to vanish finally alongside the disappearing pilchard, with exhausted lodes of tin and lead, with the blighted potato. In gathering the fragments that remain what appears to surface then is a vocabulary suited to trade and economic transaction, to construction and to the negotiation of personal relationships and to manufacture. It does not, at a tentative, cursory and admittedly very limited preliminary investigation, appear to be a language in which to express nuanced or philosophical ideas or to remake and reconsider old concepts. I entered the word 'fiction' into the translation sites and got the answer *gow* 'a lie'.

It seemed to me to be a melancholy irony that the dominant discourse, a discourse mediated by the English language, which has been energised over the centuries by the innovations of individuals like Trevisa, permitted a debate about the alterity of Cornishness, which could not be expressed in the Cornish language itself. There appear to be no words in Cornish to express effectively the subtlety of nationalist agenda, to function as signs for the occult nature of localised culture and histories. The totalised pedagogy that stands in binary opposition to the performative, particular fragment of individual experience could not be expressed symbolically because the language appears to be fossilised in the pragmatics of a pre-industrial and then industrial past. It has not been sufficiently spoken to be able to evolve, alongside other languages, and so has only a limited vocabulary to express contemporary post-colonial theory. It seems to belong more securely to a performative past, rather than to a performative present. I could find no words that might articulate, for example, a feminist discourse. I could only find approximations, using aggregated or compound words, imprecise, archaic and patriarchal. Out of a population of about 500,000 people in the Duchy about 500 claim to be fluent speakers of Cornish, about 0.1% of people living there, which technically makes Cornwall's second language, in 2016, Polish (0.4%). The only motive I could find to want to learn Cornish myself was to unravel the histories buried inside local place names.

VAL DIGGLE: A POETICS OF UNCERTAINTY

ANECDOTA NUMBER TEN: *TREVISA CAKE*

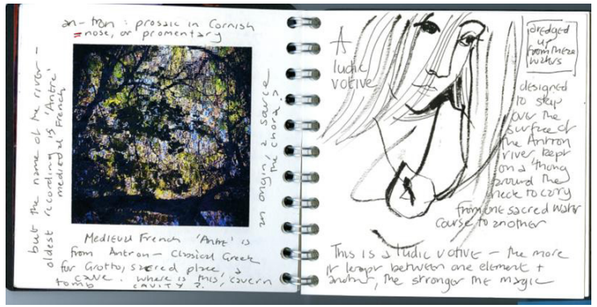
The first iteration of a *Trevisa Cake* intervention was early in the *Trevisa Project* research, when I worked with the Glasney site and groups of second year Theatre students from Falmouth University, at the request of Misha Myers. We had spent a day which I had described as *riffing with the angel of history*, using Paul Klee's monoprint of the *Angelus Novus* (1920) as a starting point. Students had, at various times, made paper boats out of yellow paper and sailed them down the river Antron, with a nightlight on board and listened to my *ludic votive* tale, where an artefact, pierced and designed to be hung around the neck, was carried from sacred water course to sacred water course and then, once released, skipped over the surface. The more times it leapt, stitching together the elements of earth and air and water, the stronger the magic, the more likely any wish was to become true.

It was during this workshop that we discovered twin portals; the first a blocked doorway in the rubble infill of the boundary wall on Glasney field and the second in the stone edifice of the old public lavatory, that had led me to the *anchorhold* (see *anecdota number seven*). It did not escape our attention that both of these portals were surrounded by debris; all kinds of plastic, fly-tipped rubbish, including a discarded traffic cone, at a drunken tilt, the power of its *no entry* symbol leached away.

I described this encounter in a paper presented at a conference at Chelsea School of Art (*Transgression 2013*) to an audience of academics and doctoral researchers. I showed them images of the *clouties* decorating Madron Well outside Penzance in Cornwall, and said that it had struck me that if the debris at the edge of Glasney field was put through a shredder it would closely resemble the Madron *clouties*, that were invariably made of non-biodegradable material and therefore offensive to contemporary pagans. The gathered audience in London laughed politely, thinking I was joking about the pagan reference and serious about my ability to access an industrial shredder for research purposes, which for me, underlined the economic and cultural disconnect between our provincial and London-centric positions. practically and imaginatively.

If the idea of *telos* refers to a study of objects in terms of their intrinsic aims, purposes and intentions philosophically and *techne* is the opposite, a rational, practical method of extrinsic procedures, the *ludic votive* and the other imagined artefacts we had encountered that day, had been created/ imagined through a process that seemed to require the reverse engineering of both *telos* and *techne*. It was a process that disaggragated the grand narratives of history, which imply that events are mutully affective, propelling humanity inexorably towards a brighter future. The artefacts we used that day privileged instead the debris at the feet of Klee's angel, not as consequential stopping point, nor as collateral damage from a series of causally related events, but as Walter Benjamin observed in his fragmentary *On the Concept of History* (1940) as an agency for the propelling force that appeared to be sending the angel backwards into the future.

fig. 20 Paul Klee 1920 *Angelus Novus* [monoprint]



By this I mean that our votive did not evolve rationally. It was not modified over time through use and practice. It emerged, fully formed as an aesthetic artefact, to occupy an imagined place in history. Its raison d'etre was supplied subsequently by a performed narrative, which existed only to animate the artefact and to provide it with a context.

The students had been using a workbook that I had designed for the session. It incorporated a token that could be exchanged at the end of the day for a piece of *Trevisa Cake. Trevisa Cakes*, I explained, were baked using a traditional ginger cake recipe, in the shape of one of the medieval houses in the centre of Penryn. A piece of crystalised ginger in the middle of each cake represented one of the dispersed stones of Glasney College.

The day before I had baked a batch of these cakes and then, earlier on the day of the workshop, left a tray of *Trevisa Cakes* in the local delicatessan, and arranged for them to be exchanged for a token from the workbook. The shop assistant in the delicatessan and the group of students did not question the authenticity of the recipe, nor the design of the cake, but accepted them as somehow traditional and localised. They were made locally, exchanged and consumed happily and communally. That is all that seemed to matter. I was persuaded that if I had the time to focus on the baking of these cakes regularly they would easily slip into the cultural imaginary of the town.

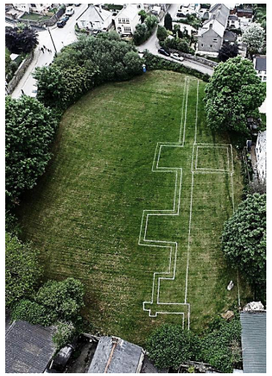


fig. 21 Katie Etheridge and Simon Persighetti , 2015, marked outline of Glasney College footprint to commemorate the 750th year of its founding, photographed by Cornish Drone

In fact the next opportunity I had to focus on the production and dispersal of *Trevisa Cakes* came in May, 2015, when I was invited to participate in an event organised by the artists Simon Persighetti and Katy Etheridge. Two years on from my original site specific work with Theatre students and following on from several presentations about my research, it seemed like an affirmation of these tentative beginnings, and signal of the embeddedness of the cultural imaginary around Glasney and Trevisa , that Katy and Simon were now also working with students and Glasney, culminating in a much more elaborate series of events to coincide with an anniversary of the founding of the college. They had organised the field beautifully with the position formally occupied by the college building described in chalk by a device normally used to mark out a cricket pitch.

So on an evening in May, an audience gathered in what once had been the nave to hear a presentation by Michelle Brown on the importance of Glasney and its unique place in Cornish culture. I had baked fifty individual *Trevisa Cake* houses and had placed them in white boxes on an altar-like table. Sitting in front of the table, in two groups either side of an invisible aisle, was a congregation of local people, visitors to the area, academics and students.

Trevisa Cakes – traditionally eaten on Fridays after disputations – are made ginger cake shaped to represent medieval houses at the heart of Penryn.

A lump of crystalized ginger inside each cake represents a dispersed fragment Glasney College.

John Trevisa (1342-1408) was born in Cornwall, the son of a Cornish MP probably educated at Glasney before entering Exeter College, Oxford, at the 20.

He witnessed and may well have participated in the Ordinalia, produced when Glasney was at the height of its creative, cultural activity,

200 years before the Reformation and the Prayer Book Rebellion.

Although the Cornish language was not under threat during his lifetime, and Reformation could not have been anticipated then, Trevisa is problematic some, because, whilst very important in a national context, his linguistic contribution is not, as far as we know, to the Cornish So should Trevisa's achievements and his connection with Glasney College be acknowledged?

If so - how can this Cornishman be celebrated and valued locally, by local people?

I had prepared another booklet for the audience.
This time I focussed on the kind of medieval
grammar school, decribed by Leach (1913/2007) that
was supported by Glasney, and constructed a narrative
about two groups of scholars, artists and grammarians,
who were taught there. The narrative describes how there
was an annual match, every Shrove Tuesday, with bats and
ball in which one group decked in stripes and another
decked in plain garments was pitted against the other.
Fathers would travel from miles around on horseback
to witness the exploits of the young. In the booklet
I provided a list of attributes associated with each of
these groups and invited the audience to identify with
one or other of them. Who are you?
An artist or a grammarian?

It slowly emerged that the collection of random individuals
in the congregation, many of whom were previously
strangers, had mysteriously self-alligned,
like supporters of the bride or groom, either side of
the invisible aisle. Micro-gestures, asemic cues, codes
and symbols had clothed them in the kind of games
strip that was barely decernible to the naked eye.
But in the end our tacit allegiences dissolved in the
sharing of food - a communal ritual in which
our differences could be celebrated,
acknowledged and mutually absorbed.

In the prologue to *On the particularities of Things*, Trevisa describes his early education when learning how to read as a schoolboy. The alphabet was preceded by a red cross, the origin of the term criss-cross, because the symbol was a prompt, instructing the child to make the sign of the cross and pray 'may God speed me in my learning' before he began his lesson. Emily Steiner (2016:232-233) translates the entry this way:

> The cross was etched in red
> At the beginning of my book,
> The which is called 'may God speed me'
> In the first lesson that I had.
> then I learned a and b
> And other letters according to their names.
> But always including "may God speed me",
> Which is crucial for me in all games
>
> Now various endeavours in his name
> I shall set aside and go forth
> And devote myself to one long game.
> Additionally, I shall forgo
> Woods, meadows and fields,
> Places where I formerly played
> And in the name of him who rules all things
> This game I will now begin
> And pray that help, counsel and advice
> He will send to me
> And that he will preside over this game

The reference to the idea of a game in childhood, after learning his letters, played in the field, woods and meadow, lends support to a grammar school education in a rural location, such as Glasney.
But it is the ludic quality of this entry which struck me most forcefully; the idea of the act of translation as somehow playful, a game, with its own rules and purposes fits the spirit of the place that we encountered collectively in our own way, centuries later.

Some defining characteristics

Grammarians

- had a love for learning languages
  (including French, Latin, Greek, English and Cornish)
- were destined for a future at Oxford University where they would study Latin texts and prepare for a career as clerics
- would eventually study law, enter the church like Trevisa or teach in schools either side of the Tamar, like John of Cornwall
- would one day be high salaried and not allowed to frolic inordinately

Artists

- studied poetry, elegancies and other humane subjects
  such as the art of persuasion and word-play, singing and handwriting
- took part in the Feast of Fools – the maddest merriest proto-pantomime which mashed up Saturnalia with Christmas festivities
- jangled the bells,
- sang indecent songs out of tune,
- wore their vestments inside out,
- played dice on the altar,
- preached sham sermons dressed as women,
- made incense out of sausages or old shoes,
- danced indecently in the street and wound up with an uproarious supper

causing - in 1360 - the Bishop of Exeter to travel to Ottery St Mary, Crediton and Glasney to complain about the behaviour of their dissolute insolent boys who were going about during the feast, extorting money from the townsfolk and generally neglecting their duties

VAL DIGGLE: A POETICS OF UNCERTAINTY

Here is one idea – in the spirit of medieval disputations, which were traditionally held on Fridays in grammar schools up and down the land, we should celebrate power of language to unite us, to debate and to bring us together as equals, by sharing *Trevisa Cakes*

and thus imaginatively and symbolically
absorb the true spirit of Glasney
by feasting on a generous exchange of ideas
in a university without walls

A SHEEP NAMED CONCLUSION

At the start of the research, my intention was hard to define, beyond whether it might be possible to examine my locative arts practice, using the template of an investigation into a particular place and a particular historic figure associated with this place, to create a deep map not only of the site and the figure, but also of the processes involved in the mapping.

My practice has, at its heart, a conundrum, namely how to articulate the aesthetic fingerprint of that which is invisible in the historic record, and so I was concerned as much with the telling of this process as the tale that might result from it. The chorographic survey that comprises this thesis became distilled from this process, as *histoire et récit*, using various modalities of writing which I decided to organise on the page to communicate *doubleness*, visually and metaphorically. As the research progressed from its tentative beginnings, I began to feel that multiple forms of my arts practice could be broadly aligned with one of two key forms of expression. These were either, on the edge of the page, mythic territory expressed in a more conventional academic voice and images generated by other people, or, in the centre of heart of the page, more experimental texts and my own images. Over time, in the dynamics of the oscillating discourse between these modalities, my *poetics of uncertainty* became located. This *poetics* gradually began to articulate aspects of the uncertainty we experience when we think about the past, about our cultural identity as product of our histories, about the reliability and unreliability of the remembering body, the necessity for and the risk of remembering, not least as agent for this account of the research.

artefacts from the Trevisa Project can be found here:
http://coolerplanet.wixsite.com/trevisaproject / http://transitionnewlynartgallery.weebly.com/val-diggle.html

Anchorhold vimeo.com/88796345
Also screened at:
Fascinate, Falmouth University 2013 and
Art.Earth In Other Tongues, Dartington, 2017

Anechoic birds vimeo.com/131208666
Also screened at:
Fascinate, Falmouth University 2013 and
the Borlase Smart Rooms, St Ives, 2015

Shadow hide vimeo.com/88930059
Also screened at:
the Newlyn Art Gallery, Transition 10, 2013

Performance lectures
Fascinate – Falmouth University, 2013
Contested sites/sights – Chelsea School of Art, 2014
Writing Community – Falmouth University, 2014
Transgression – Exeter University, 2016
language landscape and the sublime – Dartington, 2016
in other tongues – Dartington, 2017

trevisa project shortlisted for New Media Writing Prize, Bournemouth University, 2015

commissioned work:
wrestling fields – Home Cooking podcast for Apples & Snakes, 2017

Installed work:
avoid a void in the Air museum – Air Building opening, 2013
The Trevisa Project Fascinate: Falmouth University, 2013
The Trevisa Project Transition 10, Newlyn Art Gallery, 2013

Eventually these themes were articulated in a series of micro-narratives that I call *anecdotae*; discrete, self-contained descriptions of individual pieces of work using analytical and evocative auto-ethnographic voices. These *anecdotae* also refer to traces of the research which flounder in the wake of its trajectory, such as emailed conversations, heated public debate, presentations at conferences and other performances, trying to keep their head above water, to survive, be visible and acknowledged. It seemed important to do this because these experiences hold the touch of the real, the struggle and messiness of the research process which is often glossed over, ignored or edited to produce an account which appears smooth and rational but is intrinsically mythic, inevitably fictionalised. The word *enfolding* became important in this context, where these various modalities, the texts, images, animations and sound recordings, which I use to articulate the research process, are gathered together and counted.

public lectures

the secret history of unpublished things
Raising Glasney lecture series

Penryn Town Hall 2014

Initially I was unsettled by the difficulty inherent in exploring a set of ideas through what could appear to be a random or disparate collection of practices and disciplines. Highmore's ideas about super-disciplinarity prompted me to think about this collection in terms of a meta-language to describe the way that individual disciplines interact and become fundamentally changed via this interaction. But I had no words to express the nuances of my own experience of the super-disciplinary, which was often serendipitous or unexpected, volatile and painful, neither a linear nor a neatly causal set of controlled experiments and events that went to plan. I began to realise that I needed, in terms of my own reflective practice, a labile research language to express an auto-ethnography, intrinsically feminised, which would capture the essence of an argument proceeding by drift and digression. This has an affinity with Gray's description of the rituals of shepherding in the English/Scottish border region, particularly in the context of my own tribal affiliations and personal identity. It also has affinities, in terms of my locative practices, with the Cornish idea of *wrecking*, meaning *beachcombing*. In this way I started to build a vocabulary of localization that felt more meaningful to me than the research language I encountered initially.

Trevisa Cake!
https://glasneyvisions.wordpress.com
/portfolio/trevisa-cake/

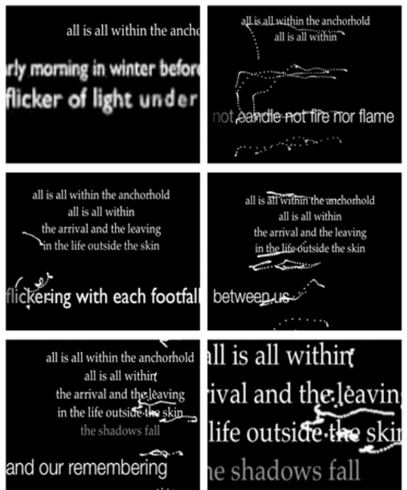
Glasney field: May, 2015

So the research makes a pedagogical contribution to knowledge. As an analytical and evocative auto-ethnographic account, its form and content articulate praxis as an *enfolding*. Here ideas are shepherded, watched over in a territory whose boundaries are defined performatively, through the enactment of the shepherded ideas, to define a *hirsel* or common characteristics by which a flock of similar ideas can be recognised, in a set of familiar heres and theres, *inbyes* and *outbyes*, which signal a series of experimental ways to proceed. But the research makes no claim to a singular outcome or outcomes that are final or cul-de-saced. Instead there is a wily sheep named *Conclusion* that refuses to be penned. Even the doubled discourse is not always consistent; the mythic and the experimental columns are occasionally unruly, interjecting and disrupting the flow of their mirrored sister. There is a sense of a telos or stopping point that could be defined here as a conclusion through the conventions of doctoral research writing, but this conclusion is more accurately a pause or hiatus in an enquiry that feels intuitively more like a potentially boundless state of finding.

The medieval period is sometimes characterised as dark, violent and plague ridden, with little to add to a contemporary understanding of the world. The word *medieval*, until recently, was invariably, in a political context, used pejoratively to describe something unsophisticated, barbaric or cruel. The term was not always specific in terms of temporality but used to separate and label a primitive *other* from a superior *self*. But within the arts, Tennyson's invocation of the medieval, as discussed in *wreccum maris, anecdota number nine*, is designed to appeal to a Victorian sensibility, and sentimental, chivalric principles associated with *largesse* and a mythic, English, pre-industrial past. Tolkein, traumatised by the Great War, also retreats to an imagined medieval world specifically to create his *Legendarium*, which animates his invented Elvish, discussed here in *anecdota number four Fallen Language*. But as the cultures of post-modernism focused attention on previously neglected subjects, Medieval Studies, which had been a marginalised discipline, began to be taken more seriously.

This thesis, which is a distillation of research activity that responds imaginatively to people, places and events associated with the later Middle Ages, presents ideas to re-contextualise the period. The *Trevisa Project* does not have the covert intentions of Tennyson and Tolkein. It focuses on our common humanity and plays with a relationship between histories and fictions that while not entirely historiographically reliable, nor exactly historiographic metafiction, also makes a contribution to an emerging genre which is part of a *metamodern*, oscillating discourse that is currently nameless.

As a creative practitioner, who is not a historian, nor a linguist, I needed a research language to communicate sets of ideas that were not wholly imagined, nor securely part of an existing historiographic record. The most fertile territory for my practice has always been in penumbric territory beyond the archive, where the paper trail peters out, and so this is where I simultaneously place the work and articulate the problems inherent in this placing. The locus for my research is the penumbra, an indeterminate area teetering on the edge of security and insecurity, where I learnt to resist the archive with its hierarchies and suppositions about what it might be necessary to know in the future. My methodology is performative and this thesis together with other, associated, creative outputs, collectively make a contribution to practice based research by articulating some of the challenges inherent in processes that do not fit neatly into a particular genre or discrete disciplinary field. Instead the enquiry sits in a crosshatched, shadowy zone between conventionally located or siloed knowledge systems associated with the Humanities in Higher Education.



The research is the product of what could be understood as a post-digital enquiry. By this I mean that the research writing comprises an analogue set of narratives that follow from an imagined, interactive e-book that, although anticipated as a creative output, never actually emerged. Although digital technologies play a crucial role in the searching for, and presentation of, information, I was also led to sets of decisions that were provoked when particular digital technologies were unavailable to me. On such occasions the absence of the digital as a device to monitor events, or as a tool to generate work, led to creative solutions to overturn an impasse, in the *kenon* or not-known. The physical structure of this thesis that articulates ideas discovered serendipitously through links and chance encounters, and, more particularly, the *anechoic birds* sound work, disrupt and critique the digital realm with its templates designed for individuals, with no knowledge of code or communication design, to interrogate the *truthiness* of such an enquiry elliptically, using these tools.

The research was conducted over a six-year period living and working in Cornwall, on the campus of what was then known as the Combined Universities of Cornwall, shared by the University of Exeter, the Camborne School of Mines and Falmouth University. During the lifetime of the research, in ways that could not have been predicted at the outset, there were seismic shifts in the political landscape of Cornwall and beyond, which prompted vociferous debate about, not only what it means to be Cornish, but also what it means to be British and European.

There were also considerable shifts in the research culture, of which I was nominally a part, which reflected national and more localised challenges in Higher Education. My particular research trajectory more or less coincides with Dartington School of Arts' relocation to a new base in the Performance Centre on the Penryn Campus of Falmouth University. Over the period of the research, many academics who had relocated from Devon to Cornwall, left. Departments were restructured and funding for research activity directed away from projects that were radical and arts based and towards those that were arguably more conventional and driven by an institutional imperative to support new digital economies and collaborations with creative industries. By selecting Glasney College as subject and as site for the research practice, the historic intellectual heart of the locality assumes an uncanny counterpoint to the new university on the hill, acting as a correlative for sets of ideas about community, what it means to be creative, individually and collectively, and for how creative institutions interact with the people who live in the zone defined by a kind of campus diaspora. The *Ordinalia* is a word-gift from Glasney College to the Glasney diaspora in and around Penryn in the fourteenth century, for example. This collective enterprise, involving half of the local population, required to stage the play, with the other half of the population available to witness the performance, is an example of a complex, shared endeavour between the institution and the people who live in its vicinity that is absent currently.

Talking to local residents about my research allowed me to gain some understanding about what people already knew about the historic site in the centre of their town and the historic figure associated with it. No-one living in medieval heart of the town, and no-one from my own university that I spoke to had heard of Trevisa, and so Initially I assumed that he was not prominent in any discourse around Glasney because he belonged to a rarefied world, that of medievalists and scholars who were focussed on his life and work in later life, outside Cornwall, where the historic record is securer. But as I started to make work that imagined a track backwards from the documents that place him at Oxford and Berkeley Castle, Gloucestershire, and his literary outputs from those locations, the tenuous connections that suggest links between Trevisa, Glasney, Penryn and wider discourses around Cornish culture were not always welcomed. I was at first surprised by this but later, as I describe in *anecdota number five: commun*, I appreciated how complex these connection are for some individuals, particularly those sympathetic to the Cornish Nationalist cause.

My research is not conventionally socially engaged, but slowly I realised that, in my efforts to rehabilitate the historic figure of Trevisa and to gather together, as poetics, the fragments of Glasney that remained, I was unwittingly re-energising the site of an old trauma that, while dispersed, literally and metaphorically, was more or less inert. The boundaries between past and present and personal and collective located identities, in this context at least, are porous and mutually affecting. Whether I liked it or not, making work about a contested site could not be a quiet, personal inquiry into the complexities of place attachment; the right to speak about it was automatically also political and potentially transgressive.

Creative risk, reassembling from fragments a site of trauma that is part of a wider narrative, an attitude, in a Cornish context, which articulates Laviolette's idea of *deathliness*, in a landscape littered with the ruins of engine houses and Neolithic tombs, requires sensitivity and the need to take some responsibility for the impact of my interventions. There is a historiographic crevasse between the discrete, uncertain elements of the *Trevisa Project* as chora and its aggregated narratives that animate an emotional response to the past, but nevertheless this emotional response had the capacity to rekindle old grievances and open old wounds. Uncertainty as poetics was painful for those whose keenest desire was for certainty in what felt like an increasingly precarious world.

As important here as the act of re-membering that had shaped my original intentions for the work, are the acts of forgetting and forgiving. Whilst the *anecdotae* also articulate a sense of contemporaneity, in which events past permeate the present, the narratives emerging from intense engagement with site are designed to re-imagine and therefore reconsider old grievances in fresh contexts and from different perspectives. The research shares some characteristics with work that could be described as postmodern, such as the artist Jamie Shovlin's invented biography of Naomi V Jelish (2004), a schoolgirl savant, currently part of the Saatchi collection. But the dispersed installation of my chorographic survey disrupts old allegiances and affiliations, without being cynical, mischievous or ironic. It is not at any point a hoax, intended to deceive. Instead, this research reanimates the historically verifiable figure of Trevisa, important in the context of the English language, but also important in the context of Glasney, the *Ordinalia* and Cornish culture more widely, and this reanimation is at the root of the disruption, which frequently became ludic, signalling playfulness as protest.

on opes and blind alleys

where does the public and the private begin and end -
in the fragments of ownership that collectively comprise the grain of the historical character of the whole?

ownership of a piece of the material body of Glasney College is as blurry as ownership of the research about it

then there is
the power of the memorised fragment to be spread virally
the fragmentary quality of the first writing in the vernacular, spread by word of mouth, by the orally literate
so there is an acoustic quality to social reform, echoing from the stones of the buildings, like words coming back
to us from the bottom of a well

fragments from a poem, from the text of *Piers Plowman,* were kept as talisman in the pockets of rebels during the Peasants Revolt at the end of the fourteenth century

did Trevisa feel as keenly the responsibility of the artist to construct, like a fractal, or chip from a shattered holographic plate, an essence of the entirety of the work, to preserve it somehow truthfully in its parts?

Historically this has been done with various degrees of success and failure – degenerate, derivative, distorted Chinese Whispers
the sound-bite and the rallying cry –
but in the intimate conversation between anchoress and pilgrim
all will be well and all will be well and all manner of things will be well

such talk is beyond me

in the performance of the writing and the making I side-step these risks via strategic alliances with the performative reader

unicorns were only ever tiny, but so strong and so fierce

Trevisa described them in his epic translation of the encyclopedia - *On the Particularity of Things*

..and the unycorn is so stronge that he is not take with the myghte of hunters..

And so I know that the only way to capture the unicorn is to persuade a virgin to sit under a tree and the beast will approach her there and lay down his head upon her lap and go to sleep

it seems wrong that hunters should take advantage of such a creature, seduced by purity - coolerplanet.wixsite.com/trevisaproject [blog entry]

The images, sound files, animations and texts are all transparently creative interventions that invite the audience to re-evaluate their understanding of the past in the context of wider culture events, alongside their own personal histories.

In April 2014, Cornwall was officially granted ethnic minority status under European Law. This was an important landmark ruling, not least for Cornish Nationalists who had long campaigned for recognition for Cornwall, as a culturally distinct entity from the rest of the kingdom, and for economic support for the Cornish Language that is currently being revived from a position of extinction. Three years later, however, there was a national referendum to choose whether or not to leave the European Union. In spite of historic affinity with other Celtic nations (Brittany, Wales, Ireland and Scotland) all of which wanted to remain in the European Union, despite its fragile ethnic minority status being, to a significant extent, dependent on the protection of European law, and despite, according to Professor Steve Smith, the VC of Exeter University, having received over £600 million pounds of European investment money, Cornwall voted overwhelming for Brexit and to leave.

The complex debate around the reasons for this decision, which was echoed at national level and then internationally in the post-mortem following the result of the American election in November 2016, was never part of this research. But nevertheless it is impossible to ignore the impact of contemporary political issues, such as globalisation, that inevitably also impacted on the Cornish desire for self-determination, to be a proud, independent nation, and by default, as an individual working site-specifically in Cornwall, on my research activity. This was sometimes manifested in tension between activism and academia, where the practice-based manifestations of intellectual argument were either mistrusted, perceived to be irrelevant or dismissed as suspiciously avant-garde.

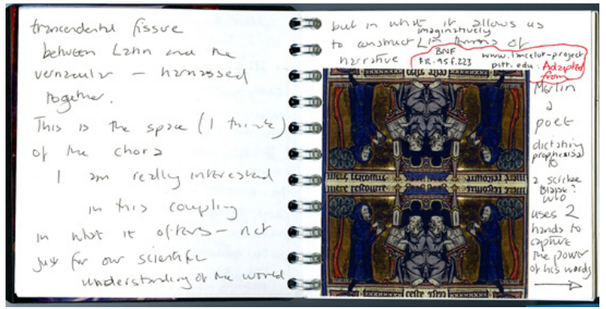
We had spent some time comparing a diagram of the boundary wall at the edge of Glasney Field, produced by Cornwall Council, with the experience of standing before it in the rain. Since my last visit a stretch of invasive bamboo had been cleared to make a passable way behind the overgrown perimeter to reveal an enigmatic stone structure in the distance.
Someone has been sleeping here, Misha said, camping out in the bushes
We tiptoed passed their makeshift dwelling in the inbetween, in the liminal territory of the public/private permitted/transgressive territory we were all now exploring

My idea of audience for the work shifted in response to what had felt initially like a kind of ennui or inertia, but later seemed charged with a more generalised attitude, characterised in the media as mistrust of the expert. So the most fertile reception for the work came in places where people gathered, from Cornwall and beyond, who were predisposed to be interested and with some kind of knowledge about art and art-making already in place. They were self-selected, regular gallery visitors or attendees at symposia and conferences, for example. The kind of intimate, focussed attention that the work received in these situations I describe as an *audition*, where an individual encountering the chorographic survey of Trevisa and Glasney has an open mind, ready to be seeded with new ideas, but has also an intuitive capacity to recognise aspects of the work that are already *hefted* or familiar to them. These audiences were willingly folded into the work and their performative contributions, documented in the *Hide for Shadows,* for example, are poignant and generous. But this audience could also be c haracterised as representative of a cultural elite, on one side of a rift in an increasingly polarised society. My intention to work democratically with a locally important site and important historical figure associated with the region, to celebrate and make them more widely known and valued, has only a very limited impact. In the end the intervention on Glasney field (*Trevisa Cake*) felt like the beginning of a positive dialogue with a more diverse gathering of individuals, or what might be described in *The Dream Vision of Piers Plowman as a field of folk*. This positive dialogue was largely enabled by other artists who had worked diligently with local communities on separate but related, socially engaged, performative projects in the later stages of my own research.

A speculative relationship between Trevisa, Glasney and the 'b' text of *Piers Plowman*, an alliterative poem, arguably amongst the most important written in the English language during the Middle Ages, is articulated in the work via a close reading of sections of the *Ordinalia* and the scholarly works of Fowler, Steiner, Betcher and Holsinger amongst others. My own chorographic survey of Trevisa's life is not literal nor does it involve the recovery of specific evidence that might prove beyond doubt Trevisa's place at Glasney, or his hand in the *Ordinalia* and/or the *Plowman*. What first grabbed my attention were his linguistic innovations that I describe in *anecdota number three: goky and the Air Museum*. This vocabulary, which is so crucial to the account of my research, is part of Trevisa's word-gift to the English vernacular. I was originally beguiled by his enrichment of my language, which enables me to philosophise in my native tongue. It was only as my research evolved that I began to suspect that I also needed to engage with a new kind of research language, or linguistic approach, to express my praxis, one that was open to doubt, uncertainty and change, that was non-linear and unstable.

We folded yellow paper boats and sailed them
down the river Antron
with a votive candle lit as cargo

an experience memorialised as reliquary with
samples of river water sealed inside



...transcendental fissure between Latin and the vernacular – harnessed together. This is the space (I think) of the chora. I am really interested in this coupling, in what it offers – not just for our scientific understanding of the world but in what it allows us to construct imaginatively in terms of narrative..

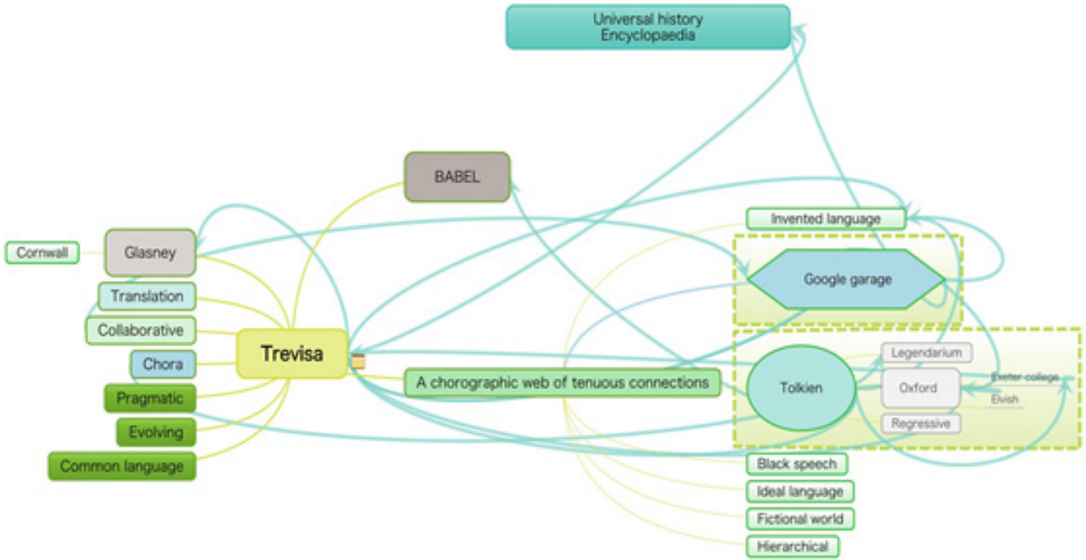
research notebook entry - 2014

I began the research with the hope of developing a more secure identity as an artist-scholar and discovered that this identity had to be performed within the inherited constraints of a gendered research culture, where ideas are largely mistrusted if they are based on empirical evidence. There is unease within my own institution, for example, and arguably in the academy more generally, about the intrinsic or immanent value of the artwork, unsupported by an exegesis. I witnessed an adversarial quality in the languages of research cultures where ideas are defended and dismantled and where, post-presentation in conferences and symposia, speakers were lined up and interrogated. Theories need to be underpinned by evidence and supported by reference to the work of experts in the field, but a quick glance through the bibliography for this research reveals that in spite of my best intentions, and in spite of the topic focusing on the visual arts, performance, history and language, fields overwhelming populated by female undergraduates, well over half the references are to male writers.

As the research progressed I began to question the legitimacy of the writings of Julian of Norwich and John Trevisa to represent a simple gendered binary. I began to think about Trevisa's use of doublets to harness the known word with the unknown, bridging a transcendental fissure.

I wondered whether the organisation of different modalities of writing on the page, my own form of the *doublet*, might allow me to express the chorographic range of my creative practice. Barbara Freeman's (1995) critique of eighteenth and nineteenth century ideas about the *feminine sublime* as intrinsically misogynistic contributed to my more nuanced idea about feminised research languages and processes that are in a sense *post-gendered*.
I attempted to construct my own research findings to represent the uncertainty of ideas in flux – ideas that were rigorous but *en pointe* - at once holding a position but also, at any moment, capable of moving into a new direction.
At this point I also began to be struck by the humour and humanity of Trevisa's energetic prose, that went beyond abstracted and philosophical vocabulary.as described in *anecdota number five: fallen language*. Emily Steiner, in her account (2016) of the importance of Berkeley Castle as a location for scholarly research in the medieval period, refers to Trevisa's 'tabloid' writing style, rich, versatile and full of energy (223). As evidence for this she supplies Trevisa's version of the complexity involved in the act of translation, which Higden compares to the 'inextricable intricacy/ inextricabilem attendens intricationem' of Daedalus' labyrinth and which Trevisa translates with relish thus, describing the labyrinth '… with its 'many halkes and hurnes [nooks and crannies], wonderful weis, wyndynges and wrynkelynges, that will not be unwarled [unwound]' (227) so that his prose writing becomes as rhythmically satisfying as poetry.

The author of the *b* text version of *Piers Plowman*, Geoffrey Chaucer, Julian of Norwich and John Trevisa are all more or less contemporaries. Julian's writing, as described in *anecdota number five: anchorhold*, is experiential and autobiographic making an intensely emotional appeal to the senses. She does not require the philosophical vocabulary that Trevisa innovated. Chaucer's writings are the product of an urbane ambassador, relying heavily on the form of the traditional courtly French roman or lay stylistically. But Trevisa and the *Plowman* author exploit their linguistic dexterity to the full, making use of what is at least a trilingual (Latin, Middle English, French and possibly also Cornish) command of languages in their writing. They both exemplify, as Steiner *et al.* have also noted, similar ideas about *largesse* and lordship and learning. Trevisa's *Dialogue between a Lord and a Clerk* in his paratext to the *Polychronicon* is remarkably similar to a passage in the *Plowman* on the same theme.
There are also multiple references to Cornwall in the b text, in the use of the word *goky* and in a bout of Cornish wrestling, for example (Fowler 1998).



This thesis uses these traces as imaginative provocation, as elements in a web of plausibility, in which Trevisa, Julian of Norwich, the 'b' text of the *Plowman*, Glasney College and the *Ordinalia* all feature and contribute to my poetics of uncertainty. The discovery of Trevisa's impassioned asides that are written in marginalia, for example, particularly those which express his dispute with Higden's account of the death of Aristotle in the *Polychronicon*, prompted me to speculate on the cross-fertilization of ideas about natural philosophy, to gain an empirical understanding of the world, through the senses, that might have taken place between the writers mentioned above. These marginalia, commenting on, and running alongside, the main body of Trevisa's translations, also endorse my instinct to express my research as a doubled account.

Elsewhere in his translation of Higden's Latin version of the *Polychronicon*, which, according to Steiner (2016), includes probably the first index to be compiled alphabetically in the English Language, Trevisa does not seem remotely interested in scientific classification, or in organising information efficiently. He favours 'the generic over the proper, the sensational over the heroic and the local over the universal' (243) to construct a list that would be 'spectacularly unsuccessful as a finding aid' (244) but sounds as if it might be cherished by Blackadder's Baldrick. For example, under H he enters 'Huge snowfall over England', under W 'Wench, buried alive" and under E 'Earth shaking at Shrewsbury'. For Steiner this kind of prose reveals 'the mind of a person fascinated by the sensational and the local, rather than following the sober, concise entries of Higden' (244). The vernacular version of the *Polychronicon* was popularly received, as if Trevisa's key purpose was not strictly academic but to provide an accessible, entertaining compilation whose primary purpose was to invigorate English prose and only secondarily provide useful content. This reinvigoration of categories of existing knowledge, to provoke new forms of expression across discrete disciplines, runs synergistically through the form and content of my own thesis. But the works of Steiner (2016) and Robertson (2017) were published in the latter stages of this research. Their findings fascinate me not least because they describe things that I could never have predicted at the outset, but retrospectively appear to endorse the decisions I took, via a different kind of immersion with the subject. This synergy is, I feel, evidence of an intuitive sense of imaginative alignment, atemporal, between elements in the praxis of the *Trevisa Project*, which becomes manifest after an intense period of making, thinking and speculation.

A Public House dedicated to Trevisa, if such a thing had ever existed, would embed the *Trevisa Project* into the cultural imaginary of the town.

Trevisa's translation of Higden's term for historical context (*historico contextu*) with the phrase 'the making and books of stories' according to Holsinger (2011: 609), refers to the medieval literary production of *compilatio* – where histories were assembled from a collection of individual tales and so signal 'both the acts of historiographical invention that populate the works of the chroniclers as well as the volumes that transmit their legacy to the present' (609). For my own purposes, the structure of *compilatio* where tales are organised, discretely and individually, is mirrored in my use of *anecdotae* expressed across two columns. The writing on the left in each *anecdota* builds to become part of an overarching or mythic narrative, but can also be read individually or episodically. The words and images in the column to the right of the page are more experimental, designed to provide nodal points or junctures in the account of the research. Sometimes there are echoes between *anecdotae*, prompting the reader to make links and connections between sets of ideas, to imagine them as a *hirsel* of similar ideas congregating, or flocking recognisably together.

In this way the research is structured to mirror the form of its subject, to allow an imaginative resonance between histories and fictions to occur. But there is also a fluid quality to the way that information proceeds in the research; the product of an argument that relies on digression and drift, on chance encounters in the field, on the architecture of links in cyberspace, snatches of overheard conversations and surprising responses to questions in semi-structured interviews (*anecdota number one: the bear house*) which are then re-imagined.

In the vitality of the descriptive entries in his version of the *Polychronicon*, which simultaneously appear to be searchable and not searchable, Trevisa also seems to be inferring that the transmission of histories is as tantalisingly complex as the labour of translation. His idea of *historical context*, as something that amalgamates content and form, is performative; it is a product of a method for structuring ideas in the present combined with the vividness and clarity of our ability to recall. He plays with the codex, encouraging interaction, making it possible for the reader to dip in and out of the work randomly, to access ideas serendipitously, and so disrupts, in a way that this research emulates, an exclusively linear idea of causally unfolding events. By doing so I challenge orthodox methods for recording the research in writing, which is itself inevitably often a fictionalised account of events, outlined in a myth of false causality because research is unavoidably subject to biases, judicious edits and generalisations from specific data. It can never be entirely neutral nor can it be completely objective.

The argument that David Fowler makes for a connection between Trevisa and Glasney College is persuasive. The son of a Cornish M.P, the family home of Summercourt, St Enoder, was in a parish that supplied tithes to Glasney. It was also a house owned by Lord Berkeley whose cousin Peter had served as a provost at Glasney. Berkeley's sponsorship of Trevisa's education seems likely as he eventually employed him as Vicar of Berkeley Castle upon his graduation. So it would also seem likely that he would have attended Glasney College as a child, the finest place in Cornwall for a boy to have received an education at that time.

So which is the more emotionally resonant – the official or the unofficial fragment of the whole edifice, when the provenance for both is speculative?

A bear's head in profile above the fireplace
A running dog under the windowsill of the little yellow house

installed work
Fascinate Conference, 2013
Briss, gouache on paper [fragment] with mirror writing
acoustic bird swarm [animation]
anchorhold [animated text and motion captured line drawing]
collectively comprise fictionalised histories of the site

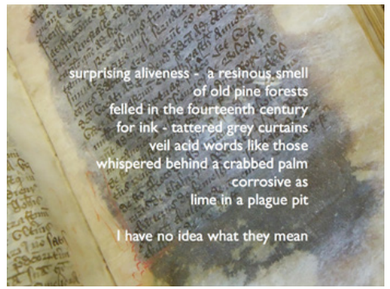
Trevisa has an obvious affection for his birthplace and reminisces fondly about his schooldays, where lessons learning the alphabet were interspersed with bouts of play in the meadows, woods and fields. It is here, in the humanity and vitality of his prose writing, in the pleasure he seems to take in people, in the localised and the everyday, which is sometimes expressed dialogically, like a play script, that I feel the essential spirit of Glasney and the *Ordinalia* is embodied, accrued through repeated, ritualised exposure as witness, participant or authorial contributor. The *Trevisa Project* is the result of deep immersion in these embodied artefacts and places, so that at times it felt like a collaborative, in a sense socially engaged, process, but was co-produced with individuals who were no longer living.

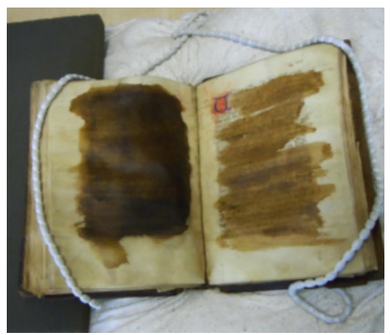
Manning's *word made land* locates the text of the *Ordinalia* in Penryn, as a product of the intellectual community at Glasney College, through the acts of *largesse* in the play cycles, where good characters are rewarded with tracts of land in the immediate vicinity of the town, and wicked characters are given land farther away. Gloria Betcher (1995) identifies a possible last date, a *terminus ante quam* for the composition of the *Ordinalia*. This date occurs in Trevisa's lifetime. Betcher notes that a tract of land bestowed as reward individually by Pontius Pilate to the jailer of Christ for guarding him so well, was divided up into three separate units after 1395, on the death of the heiress to this estate at the age of nine. She describes how after Joanna Carminow's death in childhood the land that had been held intact by her family for over a hundred years was split up and bequeathed to her three cousins. So the subtle relationship between histories and fictions here links the *Ordinalia* to the Glasney site specifically, not just through the horizontality of place, but also vertically through references to local families and their lineage.

It is this three-dimensional lattice of events that characterises my account of Glasney and Trevisa structurally, where speculative narratives are subsequently populated with fictionalised histories of the site, and the people associated with it, to provide a deep map or chorographic survey.

As this research evolved, a fascination with the drama as lived spatiality, as incarnation of locality, impacted on my locative practice and the articulation of my chorographic survey, which I describe in *anecdota number ten: the wrestling fields*. Engagement with site led me to the remains of the Carminow mansion near Porthleven and the discovery that the rich and powerful lords of that particular manor were living outside the law while simultaneously tasked to administer the law. By 1384 Ralph Carminow had succeeded the Black Prince as tax collector for Cornwall, which made the gift of his land to reward Christ's jailor in the drama, a fantastically imaginative slap in the face from the peasantry to the ruling elites.

Compilatio, the making and stories of books, was the product of a team effort that grew out of the land, with beasts raised to provide material for the scriptorium. An entire herd of cattle would be needed to produce a single volume. Throughout this research I acknowledge that much of what I produce is also the product of collaboration with technical specialists and other artists including Irene Vidal Cal, who ensured that the design elements of the book were ready to print, Jens Meisner, who rendered the data produced in a motion capture studio; Simon Persighetti and Katy Etheridge who invited me to participate in their *Raising Glasney* events in Penryn Town Hall and on Glasney field; Ian Biscoe who provided drawings for the AIR museum installation and Becalalis Brodskis, who talked with me about the image of a bear in the stonework above his fireplace.



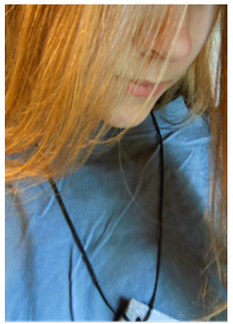


Anecdota number two: elvis the bull describes an encounter with the Glasney Cartulary, held at the Cornish Records Office in Truro. This particular example of *compilatio*, an assemblage of various documents, bound together in a single volume, includes several pages which have been deliberately obliterated with layers of ink to remove all references, post-Reformation, to Thomas Becket, the patron saint of Glasney. The thick layers of blackish-brown ink had a conflicting impact on me. On the one hand I was confronted with a shocking early example of cultural vandalism, which made the text, already indecipherable to me, because it was written in Latin, doubly obscure. But on the other hand, as I gently turned the damaged pages, I caught the fragrance of medieval pine forests from the charred wood that been used to make the ink. The effect was visceral, an encounter with what I characterise as the feminine sublime. But the encounter also signalled another important strand to this research, which is the limit of language. I became interested in the idea of the *asemic*, in language beyond words, through motion captured gestures and texts that are reversed, obliterated or over-written as palimpsest or lacuna. This emerges as a theme particularly in *anecdota number six: anchorhold* but is also something I return to in *anecdota number four: fallen language* where I compare, as alumni of the same Oxford college, Trevisa's linguistic innovations with Tolkein's stories that are written to animate an invented language (Elvish).

In the presence of the limit of language it feels like falling, at the brink of what can be reliably known, or can be reliably described in words, when nature appears to be self-organising and purposeful and creativity appears to be a self-organised pantheistic response to nature. My feminine sublime is experienced as disintegration into discrete, atomised fragments, not aggregated into a grander whole. It is immanent, microcosmic and available, as Louise Ann Wilson describes, in a search for the blue gentian of Dorothy Wordsworth on the Lakeland fells. It is present in subtle, intimate exchanges, in personal encounters with audience, described in *anecdota number seven: a hide for shadows*. But it is also available in the *anchorhold* animation of the motion captured gesture and text. Here I imagine conversations between pilgrims and Julian of Norwich through an aperture into the camera of her anchorhold, where she counselled, in a time of plague and civil unrest, all will be well and all will be well and all manner of things will be well. It is the sublime encountered through a hand lens, through a hazelnut held in the palm of the hand.

Feminised research in this thesis, as method and discourse, expresses the *heft*, digression and drift, as tentative, responsive lability. The outcomes that comprise the chorographic archive as image, sound, text and object, are dispersed as flotsam, located in websites, podcast, and monograph and in acoustic, dialogical exchanges that mirror the concept of oral literacy in Trevisa's lifetime. The remembering body, in the performance of memory, remakes memory and so the past is forever fictionalised and mind dependent. This *chora* supplements the partial recall of our collective memories with objects that are intended to be transitional, to bridge a gap between the knowable and the unknown, between the Platonic idea of the chora as *matrix of all becoming and imagined*, realised entities that are hybrid. They are poised between beholder and beheld, on the fissures of the present, informed by the past and oscillating between these binary positions to become part of an emerging, metamodern discourse.

This votive was retrieved from the river Antron along with other items
It appears to have been designed to skim over the surface of the water, stitching in its flight the elements of air and earth and water
The more it leapt the more powerful the magic
The piercing would have allowed the votive to be worn as a talisman between one sacred water course and another as the wearer waited for the perfect moment to make a wish and release the stone



ludic votive

In the context of this discourse the objects that I construct appear to be iconic, or representative of a wider subset of ideas. They reverse the process of working from a found fragment such as a photograph discovered while browsing in a flea market, which is then used as a springboard for a series of speculative ideas. The objects in my *chora* are instead realised after an intense period of research, as a distillation of that research, referencing this whole in their part, and whilst having an aura of plausibility, are in fact wholly imagined entities from the delirious museum that is the *Trevisa Project*. These entities function as materialised props in the life of the narrative, lending weight to the ambiguous *truthiness* of the performed *anecdotae*.

At the start, I considered the site formally occupied by Glasney College to be a monument to collective amnesia and imagined that my task would be to populate it with artefacts and performances that would focus renewed attention on the significance of the site locally and regionally. I also imagined that one of my strategies would be to rehabilitate an historical figure into the cultural imaginary of the town by reassessing his contribution to English language and to English literature, alongside his affiliation to Glasney College. But the conflict that emerged through this process, which I had initially underestimated, was that, for Cornish Nationalists in particular, the key cultural significance of Glasney was its contribution to Cornish literature. Any connection that I might make between Trevisa and Glasney was therefore, in certain circles, politically sensitive. For these groups, Trevisa, although he had lived two centuries before the Prayer Book Rebellion that sounded a death knell for the survival of Kernowek, had come to be associated with Englishness as an expression of colonial oppression. In this context any connection between Trevisa and Glasney was a cause for sorrow not celebration.

In asking *what remains and what is lost*? I gathered up the fragments of Glasney imaginatively and discovered that amnesiac memorials can sometimes serve their communities well. The importance of forgetting and forgiving cannot be underestimated. There are dangers inherent in totalised, collective memories that coalesce and congeal around historic rallying points. Sometimes remembering perpetuates old grievances and forges new grudges. Once the grip on old narratives of the past has loosened, maybe this could be described as release rather than loss. So what remains on this site is a potential for perpetual renewal, a rich seam to mine for future exchanges of ideas and creative collaborations, for remembering and forgetting in a roofless chantry house, through a doorway blocked with rubble, in a university without walls.

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